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Close-up of visiting instructor María Inés Camou & Chicago instructor Jorge Niedas during their performance at the ATI opening. Photograph taken by Gregg HoffenKamp.

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# THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY NTANGO &

## BY SARAH R. GRAFF

N OUR MODERN WORLD, globalization has been touted as a phenomenon that brings communities together forming a veritable "global village" and erasing cultural differences. The spread of commercial products around the world such as McDonalds is a prime example. However, the work of anthropologists and sociologists has recently shown that the increase in international trade, communications, and movement of capital has caused a backlash; many consumers have begun to look for that which seems untouched by the ultra homogenization of society caused by globalization.

Tango can easily be used as an example of both aspects of globalization. It has brought many people together who may or may not share a common language but who certainly share a common hobby. It has also created a market of people searching for the tango that is not "for export" from Argentina, one that has not been manufactured specifically for us, one that is "authentic".

The search for authentic tango is highly visible in the tango world, especially on the web. You can find classes, workshops, and tours advertising the "authentic tango" experience. On discussion lists, chat rooms, and web forums the tango crowd discusses the merits of various dance styles, music, and milongas enveloped in the aura of authenticity.

What is an authentic tango experience? Why are tango dancers interested in this ethereal concept of authenticity? Is authenticity what drives us to study with particular teachers? Is authenticity what motivates us to take a pilgrimage to Buenos Aires? Is it what guides our taste in music, clothes, and shoes? What exactly are we looking for?

When I first began to dance tango, I imagined "authentic" Argentine tango in particular ways. I pictured a particular scene in a smoky bar with glasses of dark, red wine on the tables covered in white table cloths. I pictured a woman in a long, black skirt with a slit up the side ending at the upper thigh, black high heeled shoes with t-straps, shiny red lipstick and slicked back hair. She was embraced by a man in a pinstripe suit, shiny patent leather black shoes and slicked back hair. Together they danced around the small, wooden dance floor of the bar, never releasing their embrace for more than a few seconds, never letting the tension between them subside. This was how I thought tango "ought" to be and this image guided many of the choices I made when I began my studies and my wardrobe enhancement.

Although I had already been frequenting the milonga at the 720 Club on occasion in pants and heavy black oxford shoes without even knowing how to dance. I decided that I needed to gain a better milonga "look". This meant I needed a few black skirts, of various lengths, all with slits in the sides. It took awhile but I found a few with the help of a friend who was a magnificent shopper. Then I needed high heel shoes. I had not worn high heeled shoes since I was in high school and had a painful evening with a pair of stiff patent leather pumps (hey, it was the late '80's!). Despite my traumatic memories I just bought the first pair of black closed toe shoes with a strap I found at DSW. Then I bought some red lipstick. I was ready to begin my tango experience for real now!

From the very beginning, I was under the impression that our scene was trying to recreate a little authentic tango experience right here in Chicago. I especially began to feel that way when I started going to Tango...Nada Mas. Since Carlos Gavito had helped found the studio and endorsed Bob and Kathleen's venture, it seemed all the more authentic to me. I didn't know who Gavito was exactly, but many people told me he was a really famous dancer.

At that time we had fewer milongas than we do now in Chicago. I had the impression that we had an underground



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tango scene. It was something that existed openly but you really had to look to find it. It also felt pretty cohesive, like everybody knew everybody else. You would probably run into the same people week after week in the various venues. Everyone knew where to go to dance and the tango etiquette, which of course was authentic.

Slowly, I began to hear people talk about what was and was not authentic in tango. First I heard what was correct and incorrect in my own dancing. To correct my inauthentic tango mistakes I started working with professional artists of Argentine origin, Leandro Palou and Andrea Missé, who were artists in residence at Tango...Nada Mas at the time. I wanted to imitate their smooth, romantic, beautiful and musical style. I was eager to learn from this young couple that for me embodied tango's technical and emotional authenticity. Since they were born and raised in the tango capital and learned to dance there, they must have the true passion of tango and as my teachers will convey this to me. However, I still heard (from people directly, what I read on the web, etc..) that the type of dancing I was working on was not authentic. I heard that this was not what was danced in the milongas of Buenos Aires.

When I finally went to Buenos Aires, wondering if it was true that I had learned an inauthentic tango, I realized that there were pockets of different people who danced different styles of tango. Sometimes they shared the dance floor and sometimes they didn't. Some nights you could go from one milonga to the next seeing different people in each one. On other nights one traditional style milonga would wind down and people would then go to another milonga that had a more modern style. I also realized that even in the city where tango was born there were discussions about what was authentic in tango and whether or not there was such a thing as authenticity in tango.

Another point about what is and is not authentic in tango revolves around the concept of "feeling". To dance the tango well, to be considered a high level dancer you must also have the right feeling. This feeling is not something that has been adequately described by people who talk about it but it is something that will simply be understood by those who experience it and witness it. Perhaps the feeling is evoked in the dance itself and this will be the dance of a virtuoso. This feeling may be reflected in the facial expressions of the dancers: a slight frown, closed eyes, a longing look. This feeling has erotic undertones because tango is also associated with expressions of exotic passion. When two people assume a tango embrace and begin to dance together to the music, it is considered a magical way to escape the harsh realities of everyday life. Although the lyrics of the song may describe grief, sorrow and loneliness, the dancer can find solace in the feeling of the embrace. If this feeling is not present then the dancers may be technically perfect in their movements but they are still missing something.

Is it possible to understand the tango on a deeper level if you are not from

Buenos Aires? Many of the professional dancers who have been asked this question say that it is possible, although they may say this because it is their livelihood. Perhaps the more important question is whether or not it is possible to fully appreciate tango without understanding the social contexts from which it arose or the nostalgia it brings to people who lived through particular events in Argentine history. Enjoying tango music and tango dancing is not the same as understanding the movements and the sounds as part of a culture. Understanding where it comes from, what it means to people, how it changed and evolved over time (and continues to evolve), in essence understanding the social context of tango can bring a deeper appreciation for all that tango is, was, and will be. So will this information finally bring the holy grail of authenticity?

Webster's Dictionary defines authenticity as "the quality of being authentic or of established authority for truth and correctness." When we search for authenticity in tango we look for it in milongas in Buenos Aires, in milongueros and milongueras, in Argentine teachers, in particular musical genres. But searching for authenticity assumes that the Rio de la Plata region is unchanging and the porteños are stagnant. It assumes that the place where tango originated and the people that dance it are not complex and frozen in time. There are stereotypical ideas about the tango and they are even commodified and institutionalized by the Argentine government but does that make them authentic?

Authenticity cannot be an objective quality we find in something. Like stereotypes, images of authenticity are idealized representations of reality. The search for authentic tango is actually a search for an invented quality that we can find if we really want to, but it won't be "authentic". Like my imagined scene in a smoky bar, the concocted myth of authenticity is created in the absence of actual experience.



# Grand Opening of the American Tango Institute Brings Large Crowd BY SUE YAN

The grand opening reception of the American Tango Institute (ATI) was spectacular. I arrived with my friend (who came as a spectator) shortly after the start of the event. As we approached the building, we were told that our car would be watched by the security guards posted outside and that was a sigh of relief. The climb to the top of the stairs was a challenge but great for the cardiovascular system, especially in high heels.

A number of people were already there. There was no greeter, host/ hostess, or sign-in but we were able to snag the last of the few empty tables. We situated ourselves directly across from the band to view everything. Delicious appetizers and sangria were being passed around (and there were plenty). People were slowly milling in and, being a novice tango dancer, I recognized some faces by the few milongas I have attended. As the tables filled up, ours included, we had to relocate the vase of flowers that was the centerpiece (reason being- vase was a bit tall and we did not want to knock it down like others did). The event was free which, of course, contributed to the large turnout, but I think a lot of people

came to support the dance we have grown to love.

The ballroom was ornately decorated and the air of excitement was contagious. Just like Latino time, there was a late start to the entertainment. Netza Roldan was the emcee and his introduction was followed by the naming of the Osvaldo Pugliese & Astor Piazzolla ballroom. The Hon. Boris Svetogorsky, Consul General of Uruguay; Manuel Medina, Officer for Language and Cultural Affairs at the Chicago Public Schools; Juan Calixto, Chairman of Latinos in Development; and Manuel Flores, Alderman of the First Ward joined in for the ribbon cutting ceremony.

There was also the unveiling of three pictures given to ATI by the Brazilian Tango Institute represented by their president Paulo Araujo

ATI is an organization dedicated to tango as well as the space where the grand opening event was held. The president of the organization is Netza Roldan and Babette Klein is the executive director. Supporting and advising them is their Board of Advisors: Norm Hoffberg, chairman, Pam Bosack, Nancy Cox, Bernardo Gutterman, Loyda Gutterman, Jim Halas, Valerie Hoover, Elizabeth Kocek, Jeanne Tucker, Boris Svetogorsky, honorary, and Charlotte Vikstrom, honorary.

Netza and Babette have many plans for the tango community including a tango festival in August. The festival will include international and national dancers/instructors. This is definitely a plus for Chicago and for the milongueros living here in Chicago.

The Hon. Boris Svetogorshy graciously gave his remarks followed by Netza's recognition of the ATI Board of Advisors and people who made outstanding contributions to furthering tango in our community: Ms. Charlotte Vikstrom, Mr. Fima Feigin, Mr. Ben Solberg, Mr. Bill Prindiville, Mr. Joe Pellizzeri, and Ms. Phoebe J. Grant.

A performance by Paulo Araujo dancing with Babette gave us a "jump start" on how awesome the dance floor was. His dancing left me amazed but more than anything, it made me more determined to become a better milonguera. After that, some of Chicago's local tango teachers performed including: Dan Byrnes and Kiyoko Lerner, Charlotte Vickstom and Leroy Hearon Jr., Jorge Niedas and Maria Ines Camou, Ellen and Oleg Mastakovich, Fred and Yermen Romero, Phoebe J. Grant and Leroy Hearon Jr.

Performances by the Chicago teachers were totally wonderful. They left me speechless and so dazzled by how the connection between two people on the dance floor can move so effortlessly (my attempts usually end up in a number of apologies and scuff marks). Each of the teachers did their "solo" performances and that was such a treat. I am impressed more and more as I watched each of the "couples" perform. I say to myself I will dance like that eventually and yes, in this decade. The live band performance by Tiempo Tango Chicago Ensemble, directed by Julie Koidin and accompanied by Maestro Gerardo Perez, bandoneonist from Uruguay, was better than recorded music. Their music pieces and the sound system was more than I had hoped for. I felt like I was being transported to Argentina with the spectacular dancers and music. Everyone was in a festive mood and so dressed up.

Once the Chicago instructors and ATI board of advisors danced the first dance, the milonga began. This was a good time for a break and to make a mad rush to the ladies room. Other ladies had the same thought, for the ladies room was crowded but then it would be, since it was a small ladies room. Aside from standing around and chatting with the other ladies-in-waiting, everyone I talked to were all enthusiastic about the event.

I had to leave early and though I had my dance shoes on, the thought of dancing was erased for as usual, more ladies than men were at this function and unless one makes a connection with some gentlemen, being asked is like visiting a dentist. As I was saying my goodbyes to the few people I knew, Gene Garner, a classmate, insisted that I dance with him and we danced 2 songs. To not dance even one song at this milonga was not very uplifting but I DID DANCE, thanks to Gene.

As I made my departure and hunted through the coats hanging on a so called "rod", more and more people were arriving. The dance floor was crowded but everyone was festive and enjoying themselves. It is great that so many people came out for this event and to support the institute. Egos were set aside and the love of tango dancing surpassed everything else.

#### PHOTOS ARE COURTSEY OF GREG HOFFENKAMP





#### Foundation Class

This class is designed to give students the foundations of tango technique. Absolute beginners are encouraged to start their tango experience here but seasoned dancers may find this class useful and are welcome as well. Registration is required.

Time: Mondays 8:30 – 9:30 pm Cost: \$80 for a session of six classes.

#### **Intermediate Class**

This class is a continuation of the Foundations Class. It focuses on technique, musicality and connection with your partner. Prior tango experience or completion of Foundation Class is required. Registration is recommended.

Time: Mondays 7:15 – 8:15 pm Cost: \$80 for a session of six classes.

#### **Advanced Class**

This class provides students with the techniques for complex movements in tango applying technical skills from the Foundation and Intermediate classes. Registration is recommended.

> Time: Thursdays 7:30 – 8:30 pm Cost: \$80 for a session of six classes.

#### Chicago Tango Project Practica

The practica is where you can practice what you have learned in class and ask questions. This practica is open to tango dancers of any level and any style.

> Time: Thursdays 8:30 – 10:00 pm Cost: \$10 includes practica & refreshments. \$5 for students registered for classes.

Our classes are conveniently located at Dance Connection Studio in Chicago 3117 North Clybourn, just south of the intersection of Clybourn, Belmont and Western.

For private lessons, performances or information on class registration call: 773.575.6906 or visit us online:

tangoproject.com

photgraphy by Daniel Byrnes

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## digital + film > photgraphy

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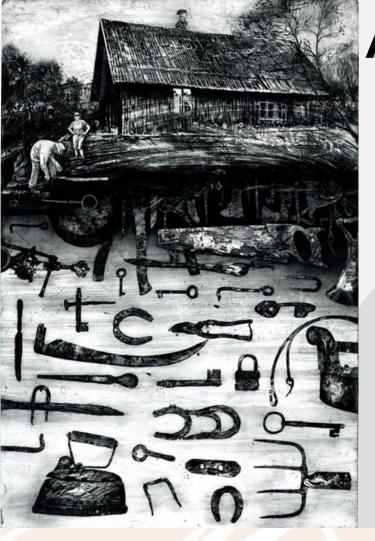


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## **Anchors of Identity**

### RECENT WORK BY MICHAEL [MISHA] GORO

**EXHIBITION DATES:** March 3rd – March 25th, 2006

**OPENING RECEPTION:** Friday, March 10th, 7:00 – 10:00 pm

**VESPINE STUDIOS & GALLERY** 1907 South Halsted Street Chicago, Illinois. Telephone: 312.962.5850. www.vespine.org

GALLERY HOURS Friday 4 – 9 pm, Saturday 10 am – 4 pm Monday – Thursday by appointment only

This fine art exhibition features recent etchings by Michael Goro. For more information on the artwork visit: www.mgoro.com

© 2006 michael goro, material culture [etching, 24 x 36 in]

Congratulations Mewlyweds!



Erica & Douglas Rivera November 19, 2005 Margo Misiaszek & Romulo Assis December 17, 2005

Sarah Graff & Misha Goro December 30, 2005





Sarah Graff & Misha Goro

## **Chicago Tango**

#### CHICAGO MILONGAS

#### MONDAY

#### Milonga Malena

Ist, 2nd & 3rd Mondays, 8:30pm-12:00am Corosh Restaurant, 1072 N. Milwaukee Chicago, Illinois. Contacts: George Drivakos/ Beth Braun, tel. 847-845-2669/847-846-5611 E-mail: BethDance11@aol.com

#### Milonga Rubia y del Morocho

Last Monday, 8:30pm-1:00am Corosh Restaurant, 1072 N. Milwaukee Chicago, Illinois. Lesson prior to milonga Contact: Phoebe Grant 312-342-4335 E-mail: WindyCityTango@yahoo.com

#### TUESDAY

#### Milonga Entre Amigos

Images Restaurant, 3908 N. Lincoln Ave. Chicago, Illinois. \$10; 9pm-12:00+ Free class prior to milonga. Contact tel. 312-437-2122, E-mail: Jorge@21tango.com

#### Tango Chicago Tuesday Night Milonga

Tango Chicago Dance Centre. 1043 W. Madison, Chicago. 8:30 pm – 12 midnight, \$12. Contact: Al Gates at 312.850.1078 or www. tangochicago.com

#### American Tango Institute's Tuesday Night Milonga

Palwaukee Inn (formerly Kabak) 1090 South Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, Illinois 8:30-12:00am, lesson prior to milonga. \$10. Contact: Netza Roldan 312.287.8406, MyTangonet@yahoo.com or www. americantangoinstitute.com

#### WEDNESDAY

#### Somer & Agape's Tango Motivo

Barba Yianni Grecian Taverna 4761 N. Lincoln Ave.,Chicago. 9:30pm-12:30am, lesson prior to milonga. \$10. Contacts: Somer 773-807-5704, somersurgit@yahoo.com; Agape 773-936-1619, findagapepappas@yahoo.com

#### THURSDAY

#### Milonga Entre Amigos

Every other Thurs -Feb. 2 & 16, March 2, 16 & 30. Ciao Cafe (formerly Chitalia) tel. 312-850-2426, 939 W. Madison Chicago, Illinois \$10; 9pm-12:00+, Contact tel. 312-437-2122 E-mail: Jorge@21tango.com

#### FRIDAY

#### Milonga Vida

Ist, 3rd & 4th Friday(if there's 5 Fridays/ month). Dance Connection, 3117 North Clybourn, Chicago, Illinois 9pm-2pm; \$15, \$12 for students Contact: Beth Braun tel. 846-5611 E-Mail: BethDanceII@aol.com

#### Los Besos Milonguita

2nd Friday, Dance Connection, 3117 North Clybourn, Chicago, Illinois 9pm-1:30pm; \$15, Contacts: Ellen & Oleg Mashkovich. tel. 847-409-4513

#### Milonga Vida-Blue Moon

4th Friday, when there are 5 Fridays in a month. American Tango Institute, 325 N. Hoyne Street Chicago. Check the ATI website for details, www.americantangoinstitute.com or call Beth 847-846-5611; 630-254-8628

#### Nuestro Tango

Last Friday of the month. Latvian Community Center 4146 N. Elston Ave., Chicago 8:30pm – 12:30 am; \$10, Contact: 262.942.4587 Valentina, 773.279.9414 Carmen, 312.342.4335 Phoebe or WindyCityTango@ Yahoo.com

#### SATURDAY

#### Recuerdo Tango Club

6137 N. Northwest Highway, Chicago. 9pm.– ?, \$15. Hosted by Carlos & Melisa Favre Contact: tango@recuerdoclub.com

#### De Corazon a Corazon

American Tango Institute, 325 N. Hoyne Chicago, Illinois 60612 \$12; 8:30pm-12:00am ; THURSDAY 9pm-2am SATURDAY Contacts: Netza Roldan 312-287-8406 Babette Klein 312-771-1226

#### SUNDAY

Somer & Agape's Tango Motivo Flatfile Galleries 217 N. Carpenter St., Chicago Milonga 8-11pm, lesson prior to milonga. \$15. Contact: Somer 773-807-5704, somersurgit@yahoo.com; Agape 773-936-1619, findagapepappas@yahoo.com

#### CHICAGO PRACTICAS

#### TUESDAY

#### U of C Practica at the Library

University of Chicago, Ida Noyes Theatre-3rd floor. 1212 E. 59th Street, Chicago, Illinois \$5 (\$3 with UofC ID); Lesson before practica Contact: Marco Mambelli; email: marco@hep. uchicago.edu

#### THURSDAY

#### **Chicago Tango Project Practica**

Dance Connection Studio 3117 N. Clybourn, Chicago 8:30 to 10:00 pm; \$10, registered students \$5. Lesson prior to practica. Refreshments provided. Contact: Sarah & Misha at 773.575.6906 or www.tangoproject.com

#### U of C Practica

University of Chicago, Ida Noyes Hall 1212 E. 59th Street, Chicago, Illinois \$5 (\$3 with UofC ID); Lesson before practica Contact: Marco Mambelli; email: marco@hep. uchicago.edu

#### FRIDAYS

#### Tango Chicago Dance Centre

1043 W. Madison, Chicago. Practica 7:30p.m.-11:00 p.m, open to all levels, \$12. Contact: Al Gates at 312.850.1078, www.tangochicago.com

#### **ON-GOING CLASSES**

Check the Chicago Teachers link on our website www.tangonoticias.com

## **Central Tango**

#### FAYETTEVILLE, AR

Contacts: Elayne's Dance - The Art of Social Dancing, www.elaynesdance.com, info@ elaynesdance.com, 479.521.6683

#### DENVER AND BOULDER, CO

Contacts: Gabriela Carone, carone@buffmail. colorado.edu, 303-546-5520, www.ragtime. org/dance/; www.danceoftheheart.com; Boulder - Deb Sclar: deb@danceoftheheart.com; Denver - www.mercurycafe.com; Chas Gale at (303) 320-4020, hotchango@msn.com, www. thetangohouse.com; Colorado Springs www. tangosprings.com

#### ATLANTA, GA

Contacts: www.atlantatangofestival.com

#### CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, IL

Contacts: www.centraltango.com; Joe Grohens: joe@joegrohens.com; www.tango.joegrohens. com 217.378.4751, Ron Weigel: TangoSociety@ aol.com; 217.328.1311 Valerie Williams: www.vjw.biz/docs/amessocdnc. htm; v@vjw.biz; 515.232.7374;

#### AMES / DES MOINES, IA

Contacts: Valerie Williams: www.vjw.biz/docs/ amessocdnc.htm; v@vjw.biz; 515.232.7374;

#### FAIRFIELD / IOWA CITY, IA

Contacts: http://soli.inav.net/~dance/tango.html lowa City Tango Club - Gregory Kovaciny kovaciny@inav.net or tangoic@yahoo.com 319-338-0655, Fairfield Tango Community - Christopher Everett ceverett@ceverett.com 641-919-1991 cell. Kelly Custer: 641-472-1001

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Contacts: www.tangoindy.org; info@tangoindy. org, David Crosley: dcrosley@challenge-inc. com; 317.407.8181, Barb Bill: 513-321-3546; bbillcinci@yahoo.com

#### WEST LAFAYETTE, IN

Contacts: http://web.ics.purdue,edu/~tango Michelle Murphy: mcmurphy@psych.purdue.edu

#### ANN ARBOR, MI

Contacts: www.umich.edu/~umtango; umtango@ umich.edu; 734.327.0642 or 734.564.0811

#### DETROIT, MI

Contacts: Amy & Ray: MotorCityMilongueros. com, 313-655-4680, AmyandRay@wowway.com Metro-Detroit area: Argentine Tango Detroit Lori Burton: Lori@argentinetangodetroit.com; http://www.argentinetangodetroit.com 586.254.0560

#### TWIN CITIES, MN

Contacts: www.mntango.org www.geocities. com/twincitiestango Steve Lee: 612.729.5306, Lois Donnay: donnay@donnay.net, 612.822.8436; Frank Williams: Frankw@tc.umn.edu, 612.379.4565. For a weekly update of Twin Cities tango activities http://mntango.org/mailmn/ listinfo/and subscribe to 'TSOM- announce.

#### KANSAS CITY, MO

Contacts: Korey Ireland; at http://www.koarts.com/tango.html; korey@ko-arts.com; or 816.931.9545

#### MT. VERNON, MO

Contacts: Karen Whitesell: www. thelearningdepot.com/murrays-1/; 417.471.1001; Fax 417.471.1002

#### ST. LOUIS, MO

Contacts: St. Louis Argentine Tango Yahoo Group: http://groups.yahoo.com/group /St\_Louis\_Tango/ and http://cec.wustl.edu/ ~hs3/ Tango St. Louis: http://www.tangostlouis. com/ Roxanne McKenny: www.tangoteacher.com, 314.324.0887. Carter Maier: tngomn@hotmail.com. Estella & Randy: tangoartists@tangorosa.com, www.tangorosa.com, 314.849.3007; Rick Barbarash: 314-993-3698, rbarbarash@ yahoo.com, Milonga Sin Nombre- Monthly Alternative Milonga:http://home.earthlink. net/~rbarbarash/analternativemilonga Tango at Washington University: www. gatewaytango.org, Shaun Sellers: sellers@wustl. edu, 314.935.6098

#### ALBUQUERQUE/SANTA FE, NM

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#### LAS VEGAS, NV

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#### TULSA, OK

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#### CINCINNATI, OH

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#### PITTSBURG, PA

Contacts: PATangoS – Pittsburgh Argentine Tango Society at www.pitt.edu/~mchp/PATTangoWeb. htm,Trini or Sean patangos@yahoo.com or 412.521.1478

#### MADISON, WI

Madison Tango Society, info@madisontango.org http://www.madisontango.org/ 608-236-0198 Nicole Stevens: 608-213-8301, milongamadison@yahoo.com

#### MILWAUKEE, WI

Contacts: www.wisconsintango.com or www.milwaukeetango.com Marek Szotkowski: tangomarek@yahoo.com

#### MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA

Contacts: www.festivaldetangodemontreal.qc.ca

#### TORONTO, ONTARIO CANADA

Contacts: www.tangoacademy.org; Musharraf Farooqi at info@tangoacademy.org or 416.536.8446.

Please send any information regarding contact information for Argentine tango events in the Midwest to central\_tango@yahoo.com and we will be sure to update each community's contact listing.Also, let us know if you'd like your community featured in an upcoming issue.