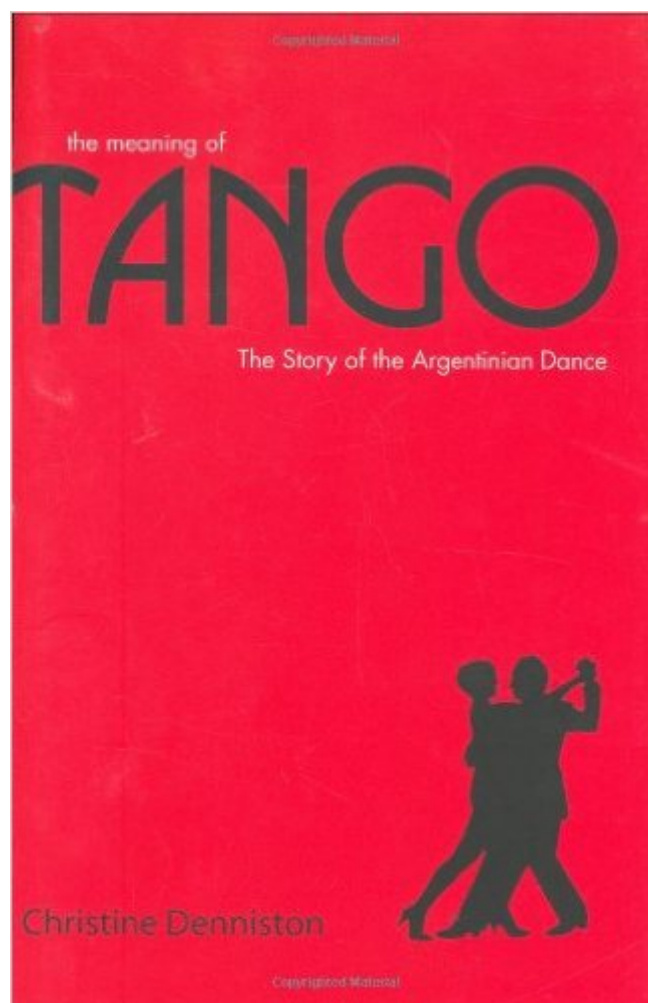


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# The Meaning Of Tango: The Story Of The Argentinian Dance



## Synopsis

From the backstreets of Buenos Aires to Parisian high society, this is the riveting story of the dance that captivated the world—a tale of politics and passion, immigration, and romance. *The Meaning of Tango* traces the development of the dance, from its birth in poverty-stricken Buenos Aires, through the craze of the early 20th century, right up to its recent revival today thanks to Broadway shows such as *Tango Argentino*. It also explains the techniques behind the dance and shows why mastering the tango is more like learning a language than a routine. For beginners or experts, dancers or armchair fans, this wonderful book is the perfect partner for enjoying the world's favorite dance.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 224 pages

Publisher: Anova Books (May 28, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1906032165

ISBN-13: 978-1906032166

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (23 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #404,794 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in [Books > Arts &](#)

[Photography > Performing Arts > Dance > Tango](#) #15 in [Books > Arts & Photography >](#)

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## Customer Reviews

My wife and I are Argentinian natives who started to dance Argentine Tango as adolescents in Buenos Aires in the very late forties and early fifties. I say "started to learn" because if you ask any "porteño" (native of the city of Buenos Aires), he or she will tell you that "it takes a lifetime and a half to learn to dance Argentine Tango". Anyway, we moved to the United States in 1959 and continue with our passion for Argentine Tango dance, music, culture, and history. All of this to tell you that this is must-read book for everybody who got this far! Those mildly curious about Argentine Tango will find in it an easy to read mini-encyclopedia of Tango, covering every facet of its culture: its music, its dance, its history, and more. Those who dance Argentine Tango will learn to love it even more as they become acquainted with the historical facts that took Tango from the end of the

19th century to today. Christine Denniston describes Argentine Tango with such accuracy that I am convinced that it is the most factual book on Argentine Tango written by a nonnative author ever. Christine's writing style never allows a dull sentence to find its way into a single page. This book should be available in Spanish for Argentinians and other Spanish speaking readers to enjoy.

It is rare for me to find a book on any dance that really excites and interests me. This was one of those rare books. Denniston explores the history of the tango without resorting to a list of dates and figures. Instead she focuses on the grand themes of the dance's unique history and how that shaped the way the dance developed and is viewed by its devotees. She also covers the fundamental techniques of the dance without becoming dry and boring. Instead she shows how the meaning and purpose of the dance influence the technique. Overall, this is a very enjoyable book on the tango. Not an academic book, but more a devotional book with very accessible writing on the history, culture, meaning, and technique of Argentine tango. If I have any criticism of the book, it is that the author could have offered some direct quotes or experiences from the dancers she consulted for the book. She places much emphasis on the Golden Age of the tango, how the dance developed, and the meaning those dancers derived from the dance. I enjoyed the focus she placed on these Golden Age dancers throughout the book; however, I felt she could have explored it even further and made it come alive even more if she had offered some direct quotes and experiences from the dancers she talked to. Despite this, the book is an excellent overview of the history, culture, meaning, and technique of the dance, and I greatly enjoyed it!

Learning to dance the Tango can be a confusing and sometimes frustrating experience. For those of us not brought up in the Tango culture of Buenos Aires, our first impressions are often of roses between teeth, and slick, stylish Tango shows. When you first see the social dance, you are presented with yet another variation. Different teachers provide their own take on the dance and may often appear to contradict each other. Even a visit to Buenos Aires - the source and spiritual home of the Tango - may add to the confusion. The Tango developed across a large city over a period of more than a century, as a result of which different styles have developed. In this book, Christine Denniston has identified the essence of the dance. From her first visit to Buenos Aires in the early 1990s, she sought out dancers who had first started to learn in Tango's Golden Age - the period from the mid 1930s to the mid 50s when the three elements of Tango - the music, song and dance - were at their height. Her time spent dancing with and talking with these older, experienced dancers allowed her to discover the essence that was common to all, regardless of their

neighbourhood of origin or style of dance. This is the book that the Golden Age dancers themselves never wrote! Even if you don't dance Tango, but have an interest in dance and love watching the dance shows on TV, this book will give you a valuable insight into one of the world's most fascinating and exciting dances. If you are already a Tango dancer, whatever your style, this book provides a link to those dancers who came before, and perhaps answers some questions you may still have. If you are already addicted, this book will help you to understand why!

Simplicity is beautiful, and any attempt by me to fully describe how brilliant this book is will undoubtedly fail because I simply do not have the skills or talent that Christine clearly has. When I read this book it was as though somebody had taken all my thoughts and feelings about Tango, organised them, and expressed them with a beauty and clarity that I can only hope one day my dancing reflects. This book is brilliant. Not a technical how to, but absolutely essential for any dancer who wants to understand the spirit of Tango. If you only ever read one book about tango, this is it.

The best part of this book is Part 1 in which the author covers the history of Argentine tango, its step child ballroom tango and the early preparation of dancers in the Golden Age. Inexperienced leaders danced in practicas for years before an experienced leader as a kind of sponsor would invite them to a milonga. The leader's responsibility was to be so well prepared that the follower did no wrong on the dance floor. She describes the culture of courtesy to the follower in the tanda and at the milonga and the codes. This is really the heart of the book. I also liked her review of the orchestras and their musical styles which comes in the latter part of the book. In between those two sections, the book is devoted to dance technique. As a tango dancer since 1997, I do not believe tango technique can be learned from a book—the subtleties and the connection are far and away too important. If you dance Argentine tango, I recommend it for your bookshelf. Wonderfully, tango is now a UNESCO World Heritage dance. If you have read this review and do not dance tango...introduce yourself to the reality of a dance like no other.

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