

Men Only: Tango Technique lessons with Peter (Jonker)

I had almost decided not go to the lesson: It was a rainy Saturday and I had just arrived back from a trip from out of town, it was a few minutes before 12:30, I was tired, and had not previously indicated that I would attend; in other words, I could have come up with a long list of excuses not to go and I didn't know for sure if it would be worth my time. In the end I decided to go anyway: my Tango was in desperate need of some technical support, given that I had only been dancing for a few months at that point. I was greeted by a smiling Peter when I entered the "Ocho de Mayo" and was given such a warm welcome that my doubts were immediately put to rest. I paid the almost symbolic fee of ten Euros and was ready for one and a half hour of Men-Only Tango (which in the end lasted almost two hours).

I was a bit apprehensive at the start: I found myself in a group of experienced dancers who I had regularly seen gliding past me on the dance floor. I worried that maybe the lessons would be too difficult for me to follow, or that I would hold the group back because of my lack of experience. But a few minutes into the lesson all my misgivings had disappeared. Peter started with a few basic exercises and I was amazed to see that no matter how much experience you have, the basis of Tango can still pose a challenge. Peter masterfully managed to tune his instructions so that each and every one of us was put to work to bring our technique to a higher level.

The thing that made the lesson so special was the great variety: Basic walking-exercises were enhanced with a theoretical foundation of the figures, based on the history of Tango which clarified the origin of the movements and made them come to life. Then our bodies were subjected to 'rigorous' dissociation exercises -ominously announced as: "and now it's time for the muscle ache section"- which tested both our flexibility and coordination to the max. And of course, a lot of time was spent on the joy of leading -in part to sooth our suffering from the exercises. All aspects thereof were paid attention to, from the footwork and body position to the handling the female body: how do you manage -in a clear yet elegant fashion- to guide the lady so that she does what you intend to? Peter had the answers.

When I left there almost two hours later -we had to stop to make room for the "Women-only" lesson given by Ina- I was totally recharged and happy I had come. I felt like I learned a lot and had a new found perspective on the sweet complexities that makes Tango such a challenging and beautifully addictive dance. And equally important, I had spent two hours laughing continuously and having fun with the boys. My fatigue had disappeared completely and I was certain that I would want to do this more often.

So was it worth my time?.. Definitely! I'd recommend it to anyone!

-Erwin!