

Tango Mercurio Annual Report 2011



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Adult Education

This year we developed a weekend beginner intensive version of our 6-week introductory course, allowing us to expand our ability to introduce tango dance to the public. Combining drop-in beginner classes at the 18th St. Lounge, 6-week introductory courses, and 6-hour weekend intensives, we introduced approximately 800 new students to the DC tango community. Notably, we also hired full-time instructor Aja Fenn as a core member of our teaching staff. Aja comes to Mercurio after more than ten years spent refining her dance in London, Buenos Aires, and the United States, and with international touring experience as a professional instructor. Her interests in teaching both roles to all students and in developing curricula for teenagers make her an important addition to the team.

We continued to offer four-five adult classes per week at the intermediate level, serving approximately 200 existing tango dancers from the local tango community. The innovation of the pre-paid Class Card system, added in Spring 2010, proved immensely popular during this fiscal cycle, and resulted in increased revenue and attendance in weekly classes.

Once again we hosted Javier Rochwarger from Buenos Aires during the month of February. We have created a strong relationship between Javier and the DC Tango Community which continues to have a significant impact on not only the technical level of dancing and instruction but also a crucial cultural link between Argentina and the United States that is important for us as ambassadors of the tango art form.

Youth & Elders Outreach

This year we consolidated the directive positions of our Youth and Elders programs into one single position, and promoted Dima Berk from *Youth Outreach Director* to *Outreach Programs Director*. Under Dima's supervision, we implemented our second year of Elders classes at Vida Senior Center and Iona Senior Center. Approximately 40 seniors enjoyed 20 weeks of tango classes taught by our instructors and volunteer assistants. As last year, the Elders program was made possible by a grant from the DC Commission for the Arts & Humanities.

Our summer tango camp for teenagers was not funded this year, but we revised our curriculum, learning objectives, and evaluation criteria for the program so that we will be ready to propose it to new funders in the future.



Mercurio Community Orchestra

Inspired by continued enthusiasm and support from local tango dancers and organizers, the orchestra recruited new members and gave seven performances for dancers in the DC area, led by Music Director Brett Lemley and Rehearsal Coordinator Tom Kenney. Venues include Colvin Run Schoolhouse, Glen Echo Ballroom, University of Maryland Tango Festival, Tango Por Que No Festival, Washington Folk Festival, the wedding of our own tango instructors Noora Aberman and Dima Berk, and Mercurio's annual fundraiser the Fishnet Fete.

For two of these, we arranged collaborations with guest bandoneón players Emmanuel Trifilio and Ben Bogart. On both occasions, master classes were arranged in addition to the featured performance. The musicians also voted to rename the orchestra from *DC Community Tango Orchestra* to *Tango Mercurio Community Orchestra*.

This project was supported by the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, individual contributions, in-kind contributions, and an outstanding amount of dedication on the part of the members of the orchestra.



Sharna Fabiano Tango Company

Sharna Fabiano Tango Company premiered two new works at Dance Place in August 2010, the 50-minute narrative theater piece, *Abrazo*, and a 10-minute duet for two women called *Points of Contact*. Both projects emphasized collaboration among the artists and the combining of creative disciplines, two major priorities for the company. *Abrazo* was produced for a second time at the Harmon Center in February 2011 for a distinct audience drawn primarily from the theatre community.

All shows sold out, representing a total audience count of 500 people, and were featured in both the *Washingtonian* and *Washington Post Magazine*. The creation and production of *Abrazo* and *Points of Contact* were supported by the DC Commission for the Arts & Humanities, Dance Place, Project Tango (San Francisco), individual contributions, and in-kind contributions.

The company also participated in the *Dance DC Festival*, *Dance/USA National Conference*, and *Dance is the Answer Festival*.



National & International Collaborations

For the second year, Mercurio participated in the Global Milonga on December 11, an international benefit synchronizing multiple tango events in North America and Europe during which dancers move to the same music at the same time via online streaming audio. All proceeds from Global Milonga are donated to Trees for the Future to support reforestation projects in critical areas in Africa, South America, and Asia. Approximately 40 dancers attended the DC event for a local contribution of \$340.

Tango Mercurio also agreed to become the custodian of the TangoMujer Dance Company archive, which dissolved its legal status in 2010. TangoMujer was the first all-woman tango company in the world and represents an important part of the historical development of tango performance. The company created narrative dance works exploring the gendered implications of both roles, depicting themes that had not been seen on the tango stage before. Mercurio has agreed to hold the remaining TangoMujer funds and use them for archiving the company's material.

As an initial phase of this custodianship, Mercurio has converted www.tangomujer.org to an online blog featuring the former members of the company, their past and present artistic work, and the work of other female tango artists exploring both roles in performance. Mercurio is also sponsoring the first annual Women's Tango Retreat, produced by Laurie Ann Greenberg at Breitenbush Retreat Center near Portland, OR. Laurie Ann organizes an annual weekend for local Portland women to learn and dance together, as well as numerous tango practices for women only. This event expands her effort to a national level, gathering women from around the United States. It is a creative conference meant to empower women to explore the dance artistically as leaders and to take initiative in directing and shaping their home tango communities. The retreat includes tango workshops, facilitated discussions, and open practice time.



Mercurio Supporter List

Program Year: July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011

Public Donors (\$100+)

Colvin Run Citizens Association
UMD Terrapin Tango Festival

Individual Donors (\$100+)

Noora Aberman, Richard Fabiano, Kathleen Golden, Susan Jampoler, Layla Kassem, Brett Lemley, Bob Lamb, Amy Mulbach, Yung-Yi Nindorf, Cynthia Schoepel, Marc Shepanek, Donna Waks, Tom & Susan White, Victoria Wood

Corporate Donors (\$100+)

Panas Gourmet Empanadas
Tango Por Que No Festival

In-kind Contributions

Bill Caldwell & Suzanne McQueen, *Studio Space*
Suzanne Perry & Dan Stein, *Guest Artist Accommodation*
Henry Mueller, *Tech Support, Global Milonga*
Charles Kelly, *Sound Equipment, Community Tango Orchestra*
Isaac Oboka, *Photography*
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