



Photo by Ramu Pyreddy

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

A 501(C)(3) ARTS-EDUCATION ORGANIZATION







Photo by R. Pyreddy



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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Early in 2023, I took over as President and Chair from S. Alexandra Russell, who oversaw a strong rebound in our dance and outreach activities in the wake of covid. My three priorities during the year were to expand on that growth with new programs, new sources of funding and new Board members.

In 2023, by partnering with other nonprofits in the arts, we took tango to three elementary schools in DC and gave a free demo at the Anacostia Arts Center in Ward 8. We welcomed Amanda Garley as Artistic Director and Joerg Schlatterer and Céline Allard as Directors, for a total of nine Board members. The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities awarded us our first arts grant, for \$15,000, and we received \$10,000 from the Mihir Desai Foundation as part of a five-year \$25,000 grant to develop our grant-writing capacity.

During the year, we offered 174 hours of classes with a total of 1,174 participants (compared with 205 hours of classes with 1,450 participants in 2022). We continued our weekly practice sessions and biweekly Sunday afternoon tango dance parties (milongas) and held our third Tango Storytelling Show and special guest workshops. Altogether, we held 53 in-person events with 1,430 participants (compared with 53 in-person events with 1,460 participants in 2022).

Events included a special program for Pride Month in collaboration with the DC Queer Tango Collective, for members of the LGBTQ+ community and any other participants interested in learning nontraditional roles in tango. And we continued our Older Adult Outreach Program in partnership with Arts for the Aging, bringing music and movement to 131 seniors, their caregivers, and senior center staff in six in-person workshops at two senior centers in the Washington, DC area.

With the income from classes and events, grants, donations, and good stewardship of our resources, we have maintained solid reserves and remain debt-free.

This Annual Report focuses on the work we did from January 1 to December 31, 2023. Thanks to the Board's ongoing commitment to the organization's mission, the tango community, and our volunteers and donors, Tango Mercurio has pursued its mission in creative new ways. We look forward to continuing our partnership with a community that nurtures our lives and those of others.

Warmly,

Dan Scheuch, Chair  
Tango Mercurio Board of Directors

# ABOUT US

Tango Mercurio is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts-education organization established in the District of Columbia. “Mercurio” takes its name from the Spanish word for “Mercury,” which is an ancient symbol of connection. The mythological figure of the messenger with wings on his feet, Mercury guides mortals to the afterlife and promotes trade between communities. This image resonates with our experience of Argentine tango—in its embrace, where two partners connect to become one; and in its communities, where dancers and visitors meet across boundaries of identity, class, and generation.

Founded by Sharna Fabiano in 2008, Tango Mercurio works to develop these connections and build community by presenting the creative tango tradition as a way for individuals to find balance in their lives and discover the unique contributions they have to make in the world through creative expression in social dance.

We teach classes in Argentine tango, from complete beginner to advanced. We host events where social dancers of all levels can enjoy high-quality music and a welcoming atmosphere. We support professional musicians and promote community building through live music performances. We connect the tango community to the broader community in the Washington, DC area by bringing dance, music, and culture to older adults, the LGBTQ+ population, underserved youth, and the public at large.



Photo by E. Arrossi

# WHAT WE DO

TANGO MERCURIO FULFILLS ITS MISSION THROUGH FOUR MAJOR PROGRAMS: DANCE EDUCATION, EVENTS, LIVE MUSIC, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH.

## Dance Education

Tango Mercurio's dance school is one of the largest Argentine tango schools in North America in terms of number of students and instructors. Our Artistic Director serves as Dance Education Program Manager. Executive Director Ramu Pyreddy held that position from January to July 2023, when Amanda Garley took over.

Our adult tango curriculum is taught by a team of experienced local teachers. Designed to produce versatile social dancers, the Dance Education Program emphasizes natural body alignment, form, and movement, as well as the personal esthetic created by each unique tango partnership.

During the year, we offered a total of 174 hours of in-person dance classes attended by 1,171 students, including a special workshop with guest instructors from Argentina.



Photo by Vanessa Tran



Photo by Eva Strawbridge



Photo by S. Alexandra Russell



## Live Music

Our Live Music Program seeks to support the folk music tradition at the heart of tango. We promote community building through music education and live performances, in partnership with professional musicians. Local musicians Peter Joshua Burroughs and Carlos César Rodríguez of RÓMEZ3arts (voice and piano) performed at our Tango Storytelling Show in October, and we continued to co-lead programs with them for our Older Adults Outreach Program.



Photo by Stephanie Williams



Photo by Stephanie Williams



Photo by Stephanie Williams



Photo by Stephanie Williams



Photo by Ramu Pyreddy



Photo by Ramu Pyreddy

## Events

A tango community is an association of dancers of all levels who attend social dances. For a tango community to thrive, dancers must have enjoyable dance experiences in a friendly environment. We host regular weekly and bimonthly events for students and alumni of our school, and members of the tango community at large.

In 2023, we continued to host our weekly tango practice session (práctica) after classes at Balance Gym and expanded our more formal dance party (milonga) from once to twice a month on Sunday afternoons at La Cosecha Latin market in Washington. The milongas are open to beginners and nondancing family members, including children. We hold an all-level class right beforehand, then open dancing for all levels in the beautiful mezzanine space. We also organized our third Tango Storytelling Show at Busboys and Poets Brookland and two special guest workshops at La Cosecha. Events totaled 53 and drew 1,430 participants altogether.

## Community Outreach

To connect generations and reach populations that otherwise would not be exposed to tango, such as older adults, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and underserved youth and communities, we provide tango instruction and give dance demonstrations, in some instances free of charge.

To better fulfill its mission, Tango Mercurio partners with DC-area nonprofits and arts organizations, mainly in DC, but also with visiting artists. In April 2023, we also collaborated with the Social Tango Project of Argentina for their performance at the Kennedy Center and in their workshops and tango social, to further their mission of “Tango For All” on their world tour.



Photo by Liliانا Chenlo



Photo by Social Tango Project

## Older Adult Outreach

Since 2019, Tango Mercurio has partnered with Arts for the Aging, a nationally recognized social service organization that delivers innovative, multidisciplinary arts experiences in community and residential care settings in the Washington area. Arts for the Aging pairs teaching artists from different disciplines for each program.

Through this ongoing partnership, in 2023, our Older Adult Outreach Program Manager S. Alexandra Russell and fellow teaching artists Peter Joshua Burroughs and Carlos César Rodríguez of RÓMEZ3arts brought tango history, music, dance, and songs to a total of 131 seniors, their caregivers, and senior center staff in five in-person workshops at two senior centers: Iona Senior Services in Ward 3 and Brighton Gardens of Friendship Heights in Chevy Chase, Maryland.



Photo by S. Alexandra Russell



Photo by Peter Joshua Burroughs



## Youth

Today more than ever, our young people need the arts as a forum for safe expression, communication, exploration, imagination and cultural understanding. The overarching goal of our Youth Program is to address this need in the immediate, physical format of tango partner dance. We emphasize the skills of improvisation and encourage all students, both male and female, to learn both leading and following roles. We find this is an excellent tool not only for gaining a mechanical understanding of how the tango works, but also for instilling values of respect, empathy, and collaboration.

In 2023, we partnered with the DC Strings Workshop (DC Strings), an organization that also works to build community and expand horizons by engaging diverse audiences, to bring tango dance and music to some 300 DC public elementary-school children participating in the DC Strings Summer Music Camp. Two of our instructors delivered a one-hour tango demonstration and workshop at three schools: HD Cooke Elementary in Ward 1, Garrison Elementary in Ward 2, and Noyes Elementary in Ward 5.



Photo by Ketil Hviding



Photo by Ketil Hviding



Photo by S. Alexandra Russell

## Tango in Ward 8

In pursuit of our mission to bring tango to underserved communities, during the year, we reached out to the Anacostia Arts Center in Ward 8 to offer a free tango demonstration. Our Artistic Director Amanda Garley and instructor Nick Thompson performed at the Center's Hispanic Heritage Month event. This successful partnership led to plans for another event in 2024.

## Queer Tango

Tango Mercurio's Queer Tango Program, launched in 2018 by Program Manager Liz Sabatiuk, is based on the premise that the experience of connection can be meaningful and valuable between any two people, regardless of their sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. We have partnered with the DC Queer Tango Collective for classes and events since 2019.

To celebrate Pride Month in 2023, we held a special program in collaboration with the Collective, for members of the LGBTQ+ community and any other participants interested in learning nontraditional roles in tango. Two special guests, queer tango artists Phi Lee Lam of New York City and Diana Suarez of Miami, Florida, taught two classes, including a free beginners class, and performed together at our Sunday afternoon dance party.

# WHO WE ARE

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Dan Scheuch**  
President and Chair

Dan is a lifelong, third-generation resident of the Washington area. He first stepped into dance as a college student in Asheville, North Carolina, where he developed a love of dance and the connections with others he made through it. He earned his Master's Degree in Marketing at West Virginia University and returned to DC to work in communications, research, and planning for organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and American Rivers, and companies such as Marriott International, Hershey's, AT&T and IBM. In DC, he tried salsa and swing before finding his home in tango. Since his first classes in 2007, he has been an active member of our community, attending milongas and classes with the many great master instructors and exploring instruction in Tango Mercurio's teacher training course in 2017. Dan joined the Board in 2021 and was elected President and Board Chair in early 2023.

*"I look forward to opportunities to further grow and strengthen our community through my work on the Board."*



**Ramu Pyreddy**  
Executive Director and Artistic Director

A native of India, Ramu holds a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering from the National Institute of Technology in Allahabad, India and a Master's in Computer Science from Colorado State University. Ramu took his first tango lesson in 2000 in Buenos Aires and was hooked instantly. He started the Michigan Argentine Tango Club at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and has danced, DJ'd, and taught all over the US and Canada. He worked as a software professional before becoming a full-time tango professional in 2018. The host, DJ, and resident instructor of Milonga Zandunga in the Washington, DC area since 2011, Ramu joined the Tango Mercurio faculty in 2013 and became Executive Director in 2020. He took over the Artistic Director duties for the second half of 2021 and again from 2022 to mid-year 2023. Ramu's teaching and dancing are characterized by a keen musical interpretation, infectious enthusiasm, and a deep love of both the music and dance. He teaches tango for the social dance floor with an emphasis on connection, musicality, and improvisation.

*"Tango has been a wonderful way to connect with people from all walks of life."*





**Amanda Garley**

Artistic Director

A Liberian-born engineer, Amanda holds a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from Purdue University and a Ph.D. in Chemical and Biological Engineering from the University of Colorado Boulder. Tango found her when she was studying to become an engineer a decade ago. It was the perfect moment to wake her up to the real joys of life: connecting with people, enjoying a balanced life, being confident in who you are, grabbing life by the horns, and finding perfection in the imperfect moments. Because of tango, she has traveled the world to attend marathons and festivals in at least 25 cities in the US, Canada, and five countries in Europe, bonded with people of all ages and backgrounds, learned from lifestyles different than her own, and honed new skills such as teaching, DJing, and organizing events. Amanda also performed at a special New Year's event for the President of Liberia. She became a Tango Mercurio instructor in 2021 and took over as Artistic Director in July 2023.

***“Tango taught me to be open to unexpected discoveries.”***



**Ketil Hviding**

Director and Treasurer

A native of Norway, Ketil holds a Bachelor of Arts in French and Politics and a Master's Degree in Economics from the London School of Economics in the United Kingdom. He worked for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris and relocated to Washington, DC in 1997 to join the International Monetary Fund. Ketil has been active in the martial arts since he was a student in Norway, starting with judo, then tae kwon do, jujitsu, and tai chi. Before retiring from the IMF, Ketil was very active in staff health and wellness and helped develop a remote program to support staff dealing with anxiety and the loss of human connections due to the pandemic. Ketil was introduced to tango music when he visited Argentina for the first time in 1990, but did not pick up the dance until 2012, thanks to a class at the IMF. With a passion for human cooperation and international peace, Ketil sees great potential in the use of social dance to bring people of different social and ethnic backgrounds closer together in a safe setting. Ketil joined the Board in 2020 and took over as Treasurer in January 2022.

***“Tango is art in its purest, simplest form, creating magic between two people.”***



**Céline Allard**  
Director and Secretary

A French native, Céline holds graduate degrees in mathematics, economics and statistics from the École Polytechnique and INSAE in France, and a post-graduate degree in economics from the Sorbonne University. She worked in the French Ministry of Finances and the International Monetary Fund for 25 years. She recently retired and can now devote much more time to her long-time passion, tango. Céline was first exposed to tango in Paris in 1999. When she moved to the US two years later, she was increasingly drawn to the “close embrace” version of tango after taking classes with Susana Miller and Brigitta Winkler, among other milonguero teachers. She loves the connection and musicality in the dance, and the unique non-verbal communication it opens up. Céline has traveled and continues to travel within the US, to Europe and Buenos Aires to meet new tango friends, and has occasionally taught with her husband and partner. She joined the Tango Mercurio Board in October 2023.

***“I’m excited about the opportunity to expand interest in Argentine tango in the DMV community.”***



**Jonathan Fernandes**  
Director and Deputy Treasurer

Jonathan grew up in Goa, a cozy state on the south-western coast of India, known for its food, music, and laid-back “susegad” lifestyle. He holds a Master of Science in Mathematics from the Indian Institute of Science and a Doctorate in Mathematics from the University of Maryland, where he teaches mathematics and statistics. When not teaching, he is active in tango, guitar, cycling and martial arts (jujitsu). Keenly interested in building communities, Jonathan previously served as Treasurer and Festival Coordinator of the Argentine Tango Club at the University of Maryland. He has been part of the DC tango community for a decade and played guitar in the Tango Mercurio Community Orchestra. Jonathan joined the Tango Mercurio Board in 2022 to help grow the tango community and was elected Deputy Treasurer in 2023. He also often volunteers as an event host, instructor, and DJ at our events.

***“I am inspired by the deep connections that tango offers to build strong friendships and vibrant communities!”***



**Joerg Schlatterer**  
Director

A manager at a professional association, Joerg has a Master’s Degree in Chemistry from Freie Universität Berlin and a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Heidelberg University. He has been dancing since his teenage years in Germany. With his wife Sarah, he founded and managed a ballroom dance club in New York City and participated in numerous ballroom competitions in the US. He placed second in the National Championships in waltz and international style tango in 2009. After discovering Argentine tango in 2013, Joerg focused on developing his passion for tango through musicality and connection. He started teaching tango with Tango Mercurio in 2015 and joined the Board in 2023.

***“As a professional educator, I enjoy inspiring new dancers to appreciate Argentine tango.”***





**Mona Moussa**  
Director

A native of Egypt, Mona holds a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Cairo University in Egypt, a Certified Public Accountant license in Virginia, and a Master of Business Administration from Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois. She has extensive experience as a finance and general business strategy executive at multinational organizations such as PwC, KPMG, McKinsey & Company, AES, Inc, and Mars Inc. Mona's love of sports and dancing started in elementary school in her hometown of Cairo, Egypt. She performed Egyptian folk dancing at school events and played handball, turning professional at 16 as a member of the Egyptian National women's team through college. Her love of Argentine tango started on a business trip to Buenos Aires in 2013. After attending a tango show, she simply fell in love with the dance and music and knew that tango is her newfound passion. Upon returning to the US, she started her first tango class with Tango Mercurio and has been a Tango Mercurio student ever since. Mona joined the Board in April 2022.

***“Tango to me is uninhibited self-expression, with an intense anticipation of how my dance partner and I each give and receive emotions in the form of energy and our interpretation of the music, lyrics and vocals.”***



**S. Alexandra Russell**  
Deputy Secretary and  
Older Adult Outreach  
Program Manager

A writer, editor, and translator, Alexandra has a Master's Degree in Translation from the University of Paris, France. The diplomat's daughter grew up in the Congo, Gabon, and France before settling in Washington, DC. She worked for decades in international organizations as a translator, editor, and reporter. Alexandra previously served on the board of the American Translators Association and as president of the IDB Photographic Society and of Footnotes, the International Monetary Fund dance club. A lifelong love of folk music and dance led her to the tango: she started dancing it in 2006, publishing articles about it in 2007, teaching it in 2010, and studying its history in 2013. Alexandra joined the Board in 2018 and took over as Manager of the Older Adults Outreach Program, training as a Teaching Artist with Arts for the Aging the following year. She served as Acting Chair from January 2022 to February 2023. Alexandra believes dance is for everyone.

***“The tango, like all true art forms, connects people. It's my refuge from misanthropy.”***

# WHO WE ARE

## DANCE INSTRUCTORS



### **Ramu Pyreddy**

Ramu took his first tango lesson in 2000 in Buenos Aires and was hooked instantly. He started the Michigan Argentine Tango Club at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and has danced, DJ'd, and taught all over the US and Canada. The host, DJ, and resident teacher at Milonga Zandunga, a regular DC area dance party, Ramu joined the Tango Mercurio faculty in 2013 and took over as Executive Director in 2020. He took over the Artistic Director duties for the second half of 2021 and again from 2022 to mid-year 2023. His teaching and dancing are characterized by a keen musical interpretation, infectious enthusiasm, and a deep love of both the music and dance. He teaches tango for the social dance floor with an emphasis on connection, musicality, and improvisation.



### **Amanda Garley**

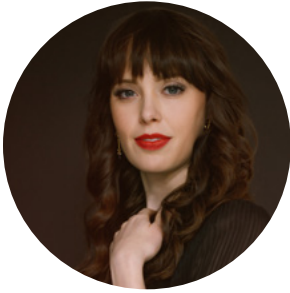
Tango found Amanda when she was studying to be an engineer 10 years ago. It was the perfect moment to wake her up to the real joys of life: connecting with people, enjoying a balanced life, being confident in who you are, grabbing life by the horns, finding perfection in the imperfect moments, and, most of all, being willing and open to unexpected discoveries. Because of tango, she has traveled the world to attend marathons and festivals in at least 25 cities in the US, Canada, and five countries in Europe, bonded with people of all ages and backgrounds, learned from lifestyles different than her own, and honed new skills such as teaching, DJing, and organizing events. She also performed at a special New Year's event for the President of Liberia. Amanda became a Tango Mercurio instructor in 2021 and took over as Artistic Director in July 2023.



### **Joerg Schlatterer**

Joerg has been dancing since his teenage years in Germany. With his wife Sarah, he founded and managed a ballroom dance club in New York City and participated in numerous ballroom competitions in the US. He placed second in the National Championships in waltz and international style tango in 2009. After discovering Argentine tango in 2013, Joerg focused on developing his passion for tango through musicality and connection. He started teaching tango with Tango Mercurio in 2015 and joined the Board in 2023. As a professional educator, he enjoys inspiring new dancers to appreciate Argentine tango.





## Sarah Schlatterer

Sarah has been dancing since her childhood. Her dance and body education experience ranges from ballet, yoga and pilates, to international ballroom dancing. After enjoying competitive ballroom dancing in the US for many years, she fell in love with Argentine tango in Washington, DC in 2013. She joined Tango Mercurio as tango instructor in 2015. Inspired by the music and her dance partner, she brings elegance and grace to the dance. As a medical professional, Sarah enthusiastically communicates the potential of Argentine tango for maintaining mental and physical well-being with the DC community.



## Nick Thompson

Nick Thompson is an Argentine Tango dancer who was born and raised in Washington DC. Nick has been dancing Argentine Tango since the beginning of 2009 when he was attending college in Portland, Oregon as an art major. During that first year, Nick was exposed to the tango club at his university, the local prácticas and milongas, as well as his first festival. Nick was so inspired, the next year he did a summer abroad in Argentina to get the chance to study with local instructors there. After finishing university, he went on to become a teacher abroad in Xi'an, China, where he taught English, art, and eventually Argentine tango in classrooms. The next year he started teaching tango in the local coffee shops and soon built the first tango community in Xi'an, China. Nick returned to the US in 2016 and has been dancing, teaching, organizing, and hosting milongas in the DMV ever since.



Photo by S. Alexandra Russell

# HOW WE WORK

## TREASURER'S REPORT

This Report from the Treasurer presents the financial position of Tango Mercurio for the fiscal year from January 1 to December 31, 2023.

The principal sources of revenue in 2023 that supported Tango Mercurio's activities were its Dance Program, Grants and Donations, and Outreach. Total sales from the Education Program were \$47,264, an 8.7% increase over the previous year (\$44,497). We offered a total of 174 hours of dance classes that were attended by 1,171 participants and 53 events attended by 1,430 participants, including two special guest workshops.

In addition to hosting our weekly practice sessions, we expanded our monthly dance parties to two a month and held four special events. Altogether, our events totaled 53 events that drew 1,430 participants.

Tango Mercurio was awarded its first arts grant from the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities, for \$15,000, half of which we received in early 2024. We also received \$10,000 in restricted funds as part of a five-year, \$25,000 grant from the Mihir Desai Foundation to expand our grant-writing capacity.

Thanks to the grants, revenue from our activities, and good stewardship of our resources, our financial condition remains sound, with our solid reserves and zero debt. Our total equity (assets minus liabilities) of \$35,870 demonstrates our ability as a nonprofit organization to reinvest net income towards our mission while also maintaining adequate reserves and helping to protect the organization against unexpected events.





# THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

257 HOURS OF ACTIVITIES ATTENDED BY 2,601 PARTICIPANTS



83

HOURS OF IN-PERSON  
DANCE EVENTS FOR  
**1,430 PARTICIPANTS**



131

OLDER ADULTS, THEIR CAREGIVERS, AND  
SENIOR CENTER STAFF IN **6 IN-PERSON  
WORKSHOPS** AT **2 SENIOR CENTERS**  
IN THE WASHINGTON, DC AREA

174

HOURS OF IN-PERSON  
DANCE EDUCATION FOR  
**1,171 PARTICIPANTS**



44

ATTENDEES AT  
QUEER TANGO  
DANCE PARTY

300

CHILDREN AT  
**3 MAJORITY-HISPANIC**  
DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS



42

ATTENDEES AT  
QUEER TANGO  
WORKSHOP



25

ATTENDEES AT THE  
ANACOSTIA ARTS CENTER  
DEMO IN WARD 8



# HOW WE WORK

FINANCIALS: JANUARY 1–DECEMBER 31, 2023 AND 2022

## INCOME STATEMENT

	2023	2022
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Tango Dance Programs	47,264	44,357
Grants, Donations and Other	14,635	17,333
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>61,899</b>	<b>61,690</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
Compensation	36,671	31,490
Space Rental	8,478	15,225
Services (Legal, Marketing, Website and Accounting)	15,149	6,126
Insurance	891	403
Miscellaneous	287	523
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>61,476</b>	<b>53,767</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>7,924</b>

*Note: Numbers may not add up due to rounding.*

**BALANCE SHEET**

	2023	2022
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash	35,870	37,053
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>35,870</b>	<b>37,053</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0	0
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Unrestricted	25,870	37,053
Restricted	10,000	0
TOTAL	35,870	37,053
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>35,870</b>	<b>37,053</b>





[info@tangomercurio.org](mailto:info@tangomercurio.org)

[WWW.TANGOMERCURIO.ORG](http://WWW.TANGOMERCURIO.ORG)



[@tangomercurio](https://www.instagram.com/tangomercurio)