



Salsa Picante Dance Company's

Salsa Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

JAN — FEB 2007

Welcome to the Salsa Picante Dance Company newsletter. Here you will find the latest news regarding the company, the school and everything salsa.

Salsa Picante Dance Company News

The Salsa Picante Dance Company had a great Fall / Winter season. Due to special events at our location at the Trinity St. Paul Church, we played a game of musical rooms. However, we continued to come out for the love of salsa and the great salsa community around the Annex. Our neighbouring salsa social, the Toronto Salsa Practice also continued to pack 'em in despite the shuffle.

Our dance company had a great performance at City Dance Corps' Christmas dance. It was Lisa Portis and myself that performed the Rumbon Dance Company number. More importantly, we were also there to celebrate the birthday of my partner and fellow Salsa Picante instructor, Eloisa Tobias.

Salsa Picante Dance Company proudly supports the Rumbon Dance Company. With a director like Bong Gonzales at its helm, this is a company that mixes all things Latin dance, including cabaret, Afro-cuban and mambo. Bong Gonzales brings with him a strong background in Filipino



Folkloric, ballroom and Latin dance, winning many international salsa competitions and performing worldwide.

This season, I have stopped drumming with The Afro Cuban Percussion Group with Marcus Chonsky to concentrate on my dancing. Those interested in studying the Latin beats with me again can expect us to restart the first Sunday in January. Bring your congas. If you don't have any, there are drums there waiting for you.

Arthur Ga

Gender Bender

I love salsa; a dance where you either follow or lead with a partner. After many years of following, I started to learn how to lead. Since I began helping Arthur with his classes, it was practical for me to learn this, and, also, I enjoy it. I like seeing the other side of the dance. I like being able to direct how a song can be danced. I enjoy being the kind of lead that I enjoy as a follower.

However, I do draw some curious stares and comments, such as, "but you're a girl." And I'm still a girl when I lead. I don't lead because there's nobody else to dance with. I don't lead

as a novelty or gag. I don't think I need to be gay to lead. I retain my femininity when I lead and don't try to be masculine. I put as much heart into my leading as my following because I love Latin music & movement and can still enjoy the friendly communication of salsa with a female dance partner.

Salsa is a sensuous dance and the way I enjoy salsa with a man is, of course, different – whether this man is a friend, other or fellow salsa aficionado. The dynamics will just be different than dancing with a woman. And so they should be. Women are always women and men are al-

ways men, regardless of how they choose to dance. But gender as well as Salsa is only as limited as we want to make it.

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Resistance to Salsa



The bridge between people who dance salsa and people who don't can often seem vast and treacherous. Salsa addicts can't live without it and their non-salsa friends can't be dragged to a salsa event. Salsa addicts often need to plan their social lives between their salsa friends and their non-salsa friends.

Many non-salsa friends admit that they are intimidated by the dance. A typical response from a non-salsa person is complete avoidance, like Fiona Bradford, a communications assistant, "Hey, I love salsa – and dip (yum, yum)!"

"It looks difficult to do." Chantel Munroe explained, an office

receptionist. "Most people would worry about looking foolish. Even in classes, they will probably think they are the last ones to pick up the moves,"

"Some people, like my roommate, just don't like to be close to a person that much. They don't want to be touching or touched," Fumie Kunimatsu, a data analyst, explained.

And I accept all these crazy reasons *after* my non-salsa friends try salsa at least once. Not because I want them to look stupid but because I am convinced that salsa is good for everybody.

A beginning salsa student should never be intimidated by

better dancers. Every salsa dancer has gone through a beginner stage. A good dancer would never discourage a new dancer.

And yes, we touch each other, and ideally, this is with respect. Salsa is about connecting with each other in friendship -- being social and part of a community.

Salsa is a great form of exercise for the mind, body and spirit. You connect with yourself, your partner and the music and that's gotta beat running on a treadmill -- heck, that's what most day jobs are for.

The Gentleman and the Salsa Leader

I had the pleasure of dancing with a gentleman over the weekend. We have both been dancing in the TO salsa scene since the old Berlin nightclub's Latin Nights, and I remember every time I have danced with this person. This is what a great dance leader inspires in his dance partners.

Technically, he makes his follower flow with him and the music. His leads are so clear and distinct, it is nearly impossible to misread him.

However, what makes a dance with him an individual treat is that he is a gentleman when he dances. What does that mean? He looks at his partner as he dances with her. Without being provocative or creepy, he simply makes her feel like she is a pleasure to dance with. He holds his partner firmly so she feels safe but respects her personal space. His leads do not feel

like commands, but rather like invitations. He also gives his follower room and time to add her own personal finesse.

Now, oddly, over the weekend, I had some most un-gentlemanly leads to coincide with his. Again, it was their social etiquette that did them in. Two leads had a bad habit of body-checking me when going into the close hold. One lead came in on an angle, wrapping most of his arm right over my breasts. I adapted by jamming in my arm between us before he could get in – inches away from a good upper-cut, too! The second close-close-lead, led his dance entirely in the close hold and I jammed my thumb into his shoulder-blade to keep my dance space. I wondered who in the world taught these men to dance like this or perhaps, for some people, this is a perfectly acceptable way to dance. However, it is simple and common respect

to listen and not wrestle with your partner if she does not respond positively to the lead.

Of course, this is a female/following perspective. Women, too, need to show respect. Followers need to show patience and encouragement to their leaders. Let him lead, even if he makes mistakes, and enjoy what he does well. Men *can* accidentally touch women inappropriately. I say as long as these accidents aren't frequent, then forgive it. I, myself, have done so while learning to lead – after which I apologize and make sure I don't do it again.

Learning to dance is hard enough without minding social etiquette but it's our choice on how we want to be remembered by our social dance partners.



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a community website
for dancers, writers
and
musicians.

Don Quixote by Picasso c/ o Allposters.com

Class Reviews



In class, Arthur has been emphasizing practice with slow salsas.

We usually start our students with slow salsas because it's easier to find the beat and learn the basic steps to that pace. However, once the student has the mechanics of salsa, Arthur likes to return to the slow songs

towards the intermediate-advanced stage.

We all want to blast our way through a heart-stopping, fast salsa with flawless finesse. We all want to experience the meaning of the Latin word *descarga!*

However, when we return to the slow songs, especially in practice and in class, we get

to refine are steps. You can't cheat your footwork in slow salsas. You have time to express more personality in slow salsas. And what is the body to do with all that extra time? The slow songs are where we learn to let the body flow between those beats. We give ourselves time to fall in love with every musical note and pause.

Salsa Romantica is a sub-genre of salsa music that emerged in the mid 80's in New York and Puerto Rico, focusing mainly on the softer aspects of salsa, creating a mix of earlier salsa brava and the ballad style. Critics have called it a commercialized, watered-down form of Latin pop -- leaving no room for classic salsa's brilliant musical improvisation, or for classic salsa lyrics that tell stories of daily life or provide social and political commentary. The form has been derided as salsa monga (limp salsa), as opposed to salsa gorda or salsa dura (fat or hard salsa). However, the strict lines between salsa romantica and classic salsa have been blurring in recent years. Several performers have succeeded in blending elements of salsa romantica and more hard-driving, traditional salsa, including Tito Rojas, Eddie Santiago, Anthony Cruz, Gilberto Santa Rosa, La India, and Victor Manuelle.

Marc Anthony and Tito Rojas are the best-known performers of salsa romantica today. [Info c/o wikipedia.org]

Student Corner





Salsa Picante Dance Company

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"Learning to dance should always be fun. It's a great way to meet many wonderful people and a fun form of exercise and self expression. It can change your life."

- Arthur Ga

Do you want to add some spice to your life? Salsa Picante Dance Co. is just the place for you! Come and experience with us the wonderful world of Salsa dancing!

For more information on Salsa Picante Dance Co. or to join our distribution list, please email:

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To add your salsa news, stories or opinions to our content, please email:

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For more info on lyw & lyw services visit:
Web: www.thisbusinessofdanceandmusic.com/lyw_bio.htm

Class Schedule 2007

(Check website for updated session details)

All classes are at Trinity St Paul's United Church, 427 Bloor St W (just west of Spadina)

Cost of Group Classes: \$60 for 6 classes, or \$12 drop in, Private \$50 for 1 hour

NEW: Salsa Practices for our students every "First and Third Fridays" Cost is free. Please invite your dance partners and friends.

Friday, January 5th – February 16

Beginner Salsa On 1 — 7:00 – 8:00pm
Beg-Inter Salsa On 1 — 8:00 – 9:00pm

Saturday, Dec 9th—January 20th

Beginner Salsa On 1 — 11:30-12:30pm
Beg-Inter Salsa On 1 — 12:30-1:30pm
Intermediate 2 Salsa On 1 — 1:30-2:30pm
Inter-Advance Salsa On 1 — 2:30-3:30pm

Sunday, January 7th –

The Afro Cuban Percussion Group – "The Conga Project"

Time: 11 am – 2 pm

Cost: \$15

Instructor: Marcus Chonsky

Masaryck-Cowan Community Centre

220 Cowan Avenue

(Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue; west of Gladstone)