TANGO DANCE AND MUSIC

A CHOREOMUSICAL EXPLORATION OF TANGO ARGENTINO

Kendra Stepputat

ROUTLEDGE

Tango Dance and Music

This book investigates choreomusical aspects of tango argentino in translocal practice, in particular its current manifestation in Europe. It looks at translocal tango argentino in its many facets: movement structures, sound structures, dancers and musicians, and the complex relations between these factors that all have their share in shaping the practice. Beyond being the first extensive monograph about translocal tango music and dance, the book crosses borders in the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, ranging from participant observation to statistical data evaluation, including optical motion capture for movement analysis. The book contains a brief historical overview of tango argentino practice in the twentieth century, bringing together the development of music and dance in a holistic way to better understand the background of the current interconnectedness. The first main part of the book focuses on the "danceability" aspect of tango music. The exploration is based on tango DJs', tango dance teachers', and tango musicians' view of tango danceability as well as experimental approaches. The second part is dedicated to tango dance and its "musicality". It investigates with quantitative and qualitative methods tango movement repertoire and principles and how these relate to tango musical features.

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1 Introduction

A woman in a red dress, fishnet stockings, and high heels, dancing acrobatically with a man in a black suit with a hat and sleek, combed-back hair, a red rose clenched between his teeth. Both halt in a pose with stretched-out legs, suggesting passion and erotic encounters . . .

The image described in the preceding paragraph might come to mind when thinking about "tango"; however, it is definitely not the kind of tango that this book is about. Tango in such a clichéd way is used in advertisements, novels, films, and plays as a symbol or indicator for "passion", "love", and "sensitivity".[1] The tango I am concerned with also stands for these things, but on a very different level. Women and men who play tango music for dancers, and who dance tango in social surroundings, have a passion and love for *tango argentino*[2] as music and dance. They practice and perform it passionately and love meeting others who have similar feelings. The scene to imagine as an opener for this book should look more like this:

> Somewhere in a European city, a dancer goes out in the evening, with a bag containing dancing shoes in their hand. Navigating through small streets, the dancer reaches the designated address, where there is only a very small discreetly placed sign that indicates the way into the dance event, the *milonga*. The venue might be hidden somewhere in a backyard, in an old factory building, or a run-down club. Even if it is a rather unusual place to dance, it will have a well-maintained central, spacious dance floor. Upon the opening of the door to the venue, the sounds of tango music can already be heard. The dancer enters the changing room, takes off the coat, and changes out of the outdoor shoes into their dance shoes. After paying the entrance fee, the dancer enters the main room. Many people are already dancing; some are sitting at tables or chairs around the dance floor. The clothes they wear are somewhat elegant, shirts with collars, pants, skirts, and dresses in all kinds of bright colors. If the dancer is a regular, they greet their acquaintances, making

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friendly conversation, though these exchanges of words are kept short because everyone is here mainly for dancing. When the next tango track starts, the dancer glances around the room, looking for a suitable dance partner. Depending on the rules at this *milonga*, the dancer will either make eye contact with a potential partner from afar or ask someone verbally. In any case, if both want to dance together, they will do so for a couple of tangos in a row. At some point, they will thank each other and continue dancing with other partners. There are no musicians present; the music is selected and provided by a DJ, choosing from a wide range of tracks considered danceable tango music. Only at special events do *milonga* or festival organizers invite a tango ensemble to play for the dancing crowd (see Figure 1.1).

A good tango evening is one where one danced with a variety of people, had good dances, is filled with endorphins from the embraces, smiles, and chats, and last but not the least, liked the music that was played.

Such a *milonga* event is characteristic for *tango argentino* social dance practice in recent decades. Tango has gone through over a century of development from a locally practiced music–dance genre into a wide variety of tango genres in both music and dance. It has been developed into

Figure 1.1 Flamante Tango playing for dancers at a festival *milonga* (in front: bandoneonist Jonatan Blaty). Summerwine Tango Festival in Graz 2014.

Source: Photograph by Paulino Jiménez.

tango dancing for stage performance—which is where the image of the cliché tango comes from—and tango concert music. It was combined with Euro-American music traditions like jazz, rock, and classical music and merged with electronic dance music to form electrotango. Tango has been re-localized—for instance, into Finnish tango music and dancing—and been tamed into English tango, which became part of international ballroom dance traditions. But *tango argentino* danced and played in social contexts in the tradition of Buenos Aires, with closely related music and dance, is also still practiced today, and especially so in European contexts. How *tango argentino* music and dance relate in social tango dance contexts, and how this relation is shaped by the people dancing and playing it, is the focus of this book. To lay the foundations, I will start this introduction with a very brief overview of tango music played for dancing, tango dancing as social practice, and people dancing and playing this kind of tango.

Tango Argentino: Dance, Music, and People

Tango argentino is a music–dance practice.[3] Its genesis dates from the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century and lies in the Río de la Plata area between Argentina and Uruguay. Around that time, the bustling cities of Buenos Aires (the capital of Argentina) and Montevideo (the capital of Uruguay) saw a massive immigration from Europe. In these urban areas, European migrants mingled with locals and former slaves from African countries. The new genre of tango prospered under these circumstances, subsequently developing into one of the most popular internationally known genres. When tango conquered the international market in the early twentieth century, the denominator "argentino" connected the genre tightly to the nation-state of Argentina. *Tango argentino* quickly became *en vogue* in Europe and has stayed—sometimes less, sometimes more—popular throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. The mid-1930s to early 1950s are considered as the golden age (*época de oro*) of tango in Buenos Aires. During this period, dozens of orchestras regularly played at dance events for a large crowd of dancers. Following this period, political and economic turbulence caused a decline in the popularity and practice of tango in Argentina, although *tango argentino* as concert music continued to be listened to and played both in Argentina and in Europe. The 1980s saw a revival of the dance genre on both sides of the Atlantic, and this revival is ongoing. Today, tango as music and tango as dance have their own traditions and histories yet are still closely connected in the practice of *tango argentino* as social dance. Tango music for dancing is just one among many styles of tango music, as tango social dancing is just one style among many tango dance styles. This book is concerned

only with these two—tango music for dancing and tango as a social dance practice, and the way these genres relate to each other.[4]

Tango music for dancing is based on the repertoire that was developed up until, and during, the *época de oro*. A typical tango orchestra (*orquesta típica*) consists of piano and double bass, a violin section, sometimes viola and cello, and a bandoneon section. The sound of the bandoneon is particularly characteristic for tango music overall. Tango music for dancing is based on a 4/4 meter, harmonic progressions within the functional harmonies range, and a prominent melodic line. A male or female solo singer can join the ensemble as an additional attribute. The tempo is, on average, around 120 bpm and is relatively stable throughout a piece. Tango ensembles that perform for dancers today interpret compositions from the *época de oro* or compose new pieces in this style. Most musicians have learned to play their instrument in Euro-American styles (classical music or jazz) and later started to study tango playing techniques privately or in an institutional surrounding.

Tango as a social dance practice is a couple dance. The partners dance in an asymmetric embrace, holding hands on one side, with their arms around each other on the other side. Tango is not choreographed, and there are also no figures or step sequences one must follow. The partners carry out steps in a joint improvisation, using a basic movement repertoire to create a dance in the moment. One of the partners is in a leading role, the other in the following role, and both communicate in an embodied way regarding their joint movements. *Tango argentino* dancing is learned in classes in private or professional schools and practiced at *prácticas*, which are events where tango dancers meet for training. A *milonga* is a dance event—often held in the late evening—where tango dancers gather just for dancing. In learning contexts and at *milongas*, music is mostly played from recordings. At *milongas*, a tango DJ is responsible for selecting and playing tango music that suits the dancing crowd.

Dancing and playing tango are closely connected to travelling. Because part of the challenge and thrill of social tango dancing is to improvise with new, unknown partners, dancers travel to meet new people and gain experience outside of their home dance community. They will dance at regular *milongas* in other places but also travel to tango festivals, marathons, or *encuentros milongueros*. Festivals feature prominent dance teachers, a weekend of *prácticas*, classes, and *milongas*, including a *milonga* with live tango music and prominent tango DJs who provide the music. Marathons and *encuentros milongueros* are weekend events as well but only feature DJs. Tango musicians who focus on repertoire for dancers, on the other hand, also travel to other cities to perform at special *milongas* or festivals. Tango ensembles plan tours to play at a variety of events and rely on invitations from tango dance organizers.

On a local community level, tango dancers organize in the form of a scene (Peterson and Bennett 2004, Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010), which can also be understood as a social network. A certain number of dancers form the core of a local tango community that is comprised not only of the organizers and teachers but also of regulars at dance events. In addition, a much larger number of people move in and out of the scene. Tango enthusiasts—including the organizers and teachers—are mostly organized in a club. The organizers plan special events, host regular dance evenings (*prácticas* and *milongas*), or invite guest teachers. Local dance teachers might run a professional dance school or work part-time as dance teachers, with their main source of income coming from a daytime job.

Particularly in a geographic area like Europe, where there are many scattered comparably small towns and countries that are relatively close to each other, tango enthusiasts do a lot of trans-border travelling, forming tango regions that are not bound to countries. The term *translocal* captures accurately the contemporary practice of tango music and dance, particularly in European contexts, but also beyond. Local tango communities—including regular dancers, teachers, and organizers—are connected to others by travelling, but also through social media. Through these contacts and connections, local communities form a translocal social network. Tango musicians and tango DJs profit from these networks because organizers frequently share insights or even travel costs when invited guests perform at their events.

The people who play and dance tango come from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. What they share is a fascination with the *tango argentino* culture and the investment of a lot of time, effort, and money into progressing in their training. To say it in the words of famed dancer and tango DJ Horacio Godoy, who admiringly talked about tango fanatics who dedicate their lives to tango: "We are not talking about art. We are talking about passion".[5] In translocal contexts, tango dancers and musicians can be identified as cosmopolitans, with liberal worldviews and a fundamental interest in other people and cultures, judging them no less or more valid than others—though, of course, having genre preferences in terms of music and dance taste. Tango dancers in Europe tend to come from a better-educated social stratum, which often goes along with a higher financial status.

My first intense encounter with tango was a concert by the famous Argentinian ensemble Sexteto Mayor in Berlin in 2002. The music captured me and instantly triggered me to wish to know more about tango music and ultimately learn to dance to it. Much later, I learned that the tango music played by Sexteto Mayor is not meant for dancing, but fortunately, I was completely ignorant to this fact and only wanted to learn how to express tango in an embodied way. I stocked up on tango CDs ranging from Astor

Piazzolla's symphonic concerts to compilations of "tango hits from Buenos Aires" and contemporary tango fusion bands. As I progressed further into tango, I learned to distinguish *tango argentino* music traditions and understood that "best of" compilations of tango hits were a good introduction into "tango for dummies" but did not capture the wide variety and depth of classical tango music for dancing. Much later, I gained access to vast collections of digitized tango recordings of the great orchestras from the *época de oro*. I even ventured into DJing at local *milongas*—a role I soon gave up again because I simply enjoyed dancing more than I did DJing.[6] Having danced a wide range of dances since my childhood, including ballet, tap dance, European folk dances, and Balinese classical dance, I explored tango as my first partner dance. Therefore, the most exciting and difficult part for me was to learn to adjust my movements to a second dancer, with whom I was in physical contact. Learning how to be led, and later learning how to lead, or, as I see it now, learning to have a meaningful, embodied dialogue with my partner, continues to be a wonderful challenge. The next aspect about tango dancing I found, and still find, fascinating is the joint improvisation. The basic movement repertoire can be used in such a broad variety of ways so that not one tango dance is exactly the same as another one, even if danced to the same music with the same partner in the same place. The ultimate fascination for me lies in the fact that tango dance improvisation is a way to embody music, transferring the sounds *ad hoc* into movement. Having danced tango for 20 years now, I still consider myself in the process of learning how to dance tango and continue to discover options of how to express the music through my dancing. Suffice it to say, I am not alone with this endeavor. Many experienced tango dancers I have spoken to declare themselves beginners, and most of them consider the interpretation of tango music through their dancing one of the most important challenges. In addition, I am still learning about tango music, discovering tango music old and new, and reaching new levels in listening and interpreting.

Musicality and Danceability

The choice of the type of music for dancing tango, including how and why tunes are selected, has been a constant topic for discussions among tango dancers for at least the last two decades.

Dancing to the music, or dancing with tango musicality, is something dancers strive for. Classes are offered teaching musicality, books give advice on how to gain musicality, and compliments are paid to advanced dancers for the way they interpret the music. However, what exactly "tango musicality" entails is often subject to personal opinion and interpretation. Being able to determine where "the beat is" and adjusting one's steps to it is unquestionably the starting point for dancing to the music. But as I will

Figure 1.2 Comic interpretation of the discrepancy between learning to dance tango and dancing tango with the music.

Source: Comic by Ileana Surducan 2017.

show, it is only the foundation for musical dancing. The more advanced a dancer is, the less they walk to the beat as they develop their dance into embodying more intricate musical features and expressions. Figure 1.2 highlights this aspect of social tango dancing in a humorous way.

On the other hand, there is the concept of "tango danceability". It encompasses the idea that some music is easier or better for dancing tango or, overall, just more suitable for tango movements. An example of how important the danceability within tango music is considered can be seen in the German-speaking tango magazine *Tangodanza*, published four times a year. In their CD review section, the first category under which a CD is rated is "danceability" (*Tanzbarkeit*), even before the quality and interpretation of the music. In an interview with tango DJne Anne Preuss, I asked the question, "What makes music tango-danceable?" Her answer was: "If it does not stimulate hopping or something like it . . . for instance, punk music would not work, because you want to jump, not walk".[7] So obviously, something in tango music triggers those who are trained in tango to move in a tango manner. Or put the other way around, dancers are trained to listen for certain aspects of music that fit with their dancing. The topic of "danceability" is debated heatedly among dancers. It starts with the question as to whether one can dance tango to music other than tango—known as non-tango or "alternative"—which some dancers love to do, whilst others despise this. Another important issue is that some dancers love to dance to live music by contemporary tango orchestras, while others prefer listening to such music but do not like to dance to it. Many dancers prefer the music of the *época de oro* and would dance to nothing else, while others like to be more experimental and include older and younger recordings into their canon of danceable tunes. Finally, even if dancers agree on a category, within that range, there are still considerable differences in individual taste and preference. In online or on-site discussions, some dancers tend to be quite dogmatic in their views, and discussions end up being futile. Obviously, danceability as it is based in tango movement repertoire is as much a socially constructed category as it is a musical and individual one.

Being part of these discussions as a dancer, at some point I decided to put on my ethnomusicologist and ethnochoreologist hat and explore the question of tango danceability and tango musicality academically. I was fortunate to get a grant to study the topic over the course of four years, generously funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).[8] It quickly became clear to me that to capture the complexity of the issue of "tango danceability" and "tango musicality", I had to look at the topic from a variety of perspectives and research traditions. To narrow the field somewhat, nevertheless, it seemed useful to reduce the topic geographically.

The Focus on Europe

Tango argentino has conquered many places and people. Investigating the phenomenon on a global scale is certainly fascinating but would lack nuances in how the practice has been established, incorporated, and

formed new protocols in various places. To be able to go in-depth into such processes, I decided to focus on *tango argentino* in Europe in the early twenty-first century.

As will be shown in the next chapter, *tango argentino* has a century long history relating to Europe. The first time *tango argentino* came to Europe was in the first decade of the twentieth century, causing a tango craze in Paris, and also reinforcing the popularity of tango in Argentina. Tango has stayed in Europe ever since, and at the same time, European influences have shaped tango practice in Argentina in a reciprocal relationship. It is now about 40 years since the great revival of tango dancing both in Argentina and in Europe. During this time, the tango dance community has constantly grown in Europe; almost every city has at least one place where tango can be learned and danced regularly. For many dancers, travelling to Buenos Aires and staying there for several weeks to take classes and immerse themselves into the local *milonga* culture is an important part of their dance education. In an interview, tango DJne Paola Nocitango from Italy described her experiences in Buenos Aires:

> I remember the last time we went to Argentina to dance, that in the milonga I really had nice tandas [series of dances] and when I asked *where are you from?* they were from Germany, Poland. . . . And then in the end I said, why do I have to buy such an expensive ticket to go to Argentina and there I dance with Europeans? I danced one or two tandas with some old milonguero and all the other were Europeans. And I had such beautiful tandas with Europeans. So I thought why can't I remain in Europe?[9]

Since the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century, there has been such an increase in the number of tango dancers in Europe that a critical mass has been reached, forming a stable and diverse community. *Tango argentino* music and dance are a constant part of cultural practices established in Europe, although it holds only a minor share in the cultural market.

Over the years, European tango dancers have developed their own versions of *tango argentino* practice, which is mainly caused by the fact that tango dance communities are often geographically scattered. As stated before, travelling to other cities for dancing, and organizing bigger events where tango dancers come together, has become an essential part of European tango practice. Particularly, the phenomenon of *encuentros milongueros* is a practice that developed about 15 years ago in Europe and increasingly shapes the way tango is practiced there. Tango in Europe is neither a diaspora phenomenon nor a simple copy of tango dance practice in Argentina. However, Argentina and Buenos Aires are considered the focal point of tango practice, and travelling there to experience "authenticity"

is a goal for many (see Stepputat 2017). Argentina, or more precisely, Buenos Aires, has a strong influence on European tango practice as a travel destination and as home of touring dance teachers, tango DJs, and musicians. Vice versa, European tango dancers influence the state of being of tango in Argentina, through appreciation, selection, and last but certainly not the least, economic support. Seen from a current perspective, "Buenos Aires" and "translocal" *tango argentino* are not two separate practices. Instead, one could consider the practice in Buenos Aires as a major, central part of translocal *tango argentino*. Trends in music and dance as well as rules on and off the dancefloor often stem from (historical or present-day) circumstances in Buenos Aires, and dancers in Europe put emphasis on following—more or less strictly—those rules and trends. In this book I will not explore in detail the mutual influences or the political and economic relations between them.[10] However, these reciprocal relations need to be kept in mind as the background and an important shaping factor of contemporary tango practice in Europe.

Research Approach and Methods, Leading to the Structure of This Book

Until around 20 years ago, ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological studies about tango were rare. Recent decades, however, have seen a vast increase in interest in *tango argentino* as a field of research. Publications deal with many aspects of tango, including—but not limited to—migration history (Azzi 1996, Ostuni 2005), the African roots (Chasteen 2000, Karush 2012), dance movement analysis (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016), prominent musicians like Carlos Gardel (Barsky and Barsky 2004) and Astor Piazzolla (Azzi and Collier 2000, Garcia Brunelli 2008), studies of historical musical styles (Link and Wendland 2016, Krüger 2012), development of tango dancing (Denniston 2007, Cara 2009, Merrit 2012, Benzecry Sabá 2015), gender issues (Liska 2017, Savigliano 2010, Davis 2015), adaptations into re-localized forms and global aspects (Goertzen and Azzi 1999, Pelinski 2000b, Petridou 2015, Liska 2016), the tango renovation of the early twenty-first century (Bolasell 2011, Aharonián 2014, Carozzi 2015, Luker 2016), and many more. This book adds to the study of *tango argentino* by exploring an as yet under-researched topic, which is the relation between tango music and tango dance practice in historical and present-day contexts.[11]

My approach to this topic is choreomusical. Choreomusicology aims at uniting the study of music and dance and their relations. In a recent publication, my colleague Elina Seye and I argue for the importance of incorporating aspects of sound and movement, but also academic approaches

from both fields in our studies (Stepputat and Seye 2020, 11–12). As a trained ethnomusicologist and ethnochoreologist, I look at tango in a holistic way, without separating the dance practice from the music, thus focusing on both aspects in a similar in-depth manner. Two publications have argued for the incorporation of the corporeality of playing tango (Pelinski 2000a) and the appreciation of dance (Liska 2014) in the study of tango music. Both authors are critical that former studies in tango music have—deliberately or subconsciously—excluded everything corporeal, which the authors claim is rooted in musicologists' perception of music as something ephemeral, with anything physical and bodily being of lesser value or less sophisticated (see Pelinski 2000a, 255). Liska heavily criticizes earlier writings in which the evolution of tango is seen as from "primitive" (with focus on the dance) toward "sophisticated" (with focus on complex musical features). She argues that such views disregard the social contexts that led to this development—and the post-factum explanation of the development with evolution theory "from simple to complex" in terms of musical elements (2014, 33). Liska then asks if such an approach can do justice to a music that was born from its interaction with dance and if any analysis that ignores the effects tango music has on dancers can be significant (2014, 35). I agree with both scholars concerning the necessity to include dance into the study of tango music. I also argue that tango music needs to be included into the study of tango dance, because both elements together form the whole and hence need to be understood and researched in a choreomusical way.

In the introduction to our publication on choreomusicology, we dealt with the fact that it is hard to not take a "music" or "dance" perspective when looking at music–dance relations, because we are academically trained to do so (Stepputat and Seye 2020, 10–11). This divide might even hinder the understanding of a performing art: In many communities, sound and movement in performance are not terminologically and conceptually separated (Hood and Hutchinson 2020). However, in tango music–dance practice and terminology, the two elements are codified into separate entities. Yet as I will show, researching them separately when the aim to understand their relations is pointless. Hence, my perspective is at all times choreomusical, even if from a classical "musicology" and "choreology" standpoint it might lean toward one or the other at times.

Suffice it to say, the foundation of my research was extensive fieldwork. The type of fieldwork I conducted could be termed fieldwork "at home" or "in my own backyard" (Nettl 2015, 201–202). I am part of, and at the same time study, the European tango community and its practice.[12] However, I do not feel comfortable with a differentiation of "own" and "Other", as I do not find the terms "insider" and "outsider" appropriate

when studying a translocal community practice. I agree with Nettl, who states that:

> The idea that the world consists of a lot of easily distinguished societies, each with its distinct culture, and that you can tell easily which one you belong to, and are an insider of, while being an outsider to all others . . . has had to be abandoned.
>
> (Nettl 2015, 201)

Individuals can belong to many groups, or cultural cohorts, to use Turino's term (2008, 111–112), in parallel. *Tango argentino*, in Turino's terms, would be an "interest-based cohort", where being a member is a conscious choice (Turino 2008, 117), or a "theme-focused social network", into which one is not born but chooses to join based on one's interests (Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010, 15–16). To this I want to add the notion that the degree to which a person is integrated into and knowledgeable about a community (culture, society, cohort, social network . . .) differs significantly from one member to another.[13] The degree to which one is "inside" or "outside" the knowledge and practice is more of a continuum with no clear boundaries between the categories. Hence, I am not able to define myself as either an insider or an outsider. I consider myself a member of a community, as I consider myself a researcher. Depending on the hat I put on, I have different yet overlapping and mutually informed perspectives on topics that I chose to research and which are also relevant to my communities.

During my active fieldwork periods, I encountered two major obstacles. The first one was to be expected: I had become a member of a *tango argentino* community by just practicing and only started to reflect and analyze my own practice after I already danced for more than a decade. Changing into a research perspective and learning to question one's own practice are just as challenging as learning an entirely new practice through participation and performance to study it (see Koutsouba 1999). Apart from the problem of stepping outside of my inherent knowledge and trying to understand what I practice, a maybe even bigger problem soon appeared. As an active member of the community I research, of course I have opinions and ideas about what is "good" and "right". For the sake of academic balance, I had to negotiate between my active role in the community and being a researcher observing what community members—including myself—say and do. Trying to perceive trends not overshadowed by my own opinions sometimes drove me crazy, because even in exciting debates, I did not allow myself to voice an opinion, for fear of influencing others. Quite early in the "Tango Danceability of Music in European Perspective" project (March 2015), I organized a *milonga* with live music for my home

tango community in Graz, Austria. At this event, I gave a short presentation about the project and my aims. I wanted to inform my community about what I would be doing in the next few years, openly explaining to them that they would probably indirectly or even directly be a part of my research. It felt right and necessary to include my fellow dancers consciously into my research journey, because only by doing this could the work become a community-endorsed endeavor. Over the course of almost ten years, I conducted formal and informal interviews with tango dancers, tango DJs, and tango musicians about their takes on musicality and danceability. To this I added primary, mainly online, sources, such as blogs and social media discussions, and secondary sources from the broad field of previous research into *tango argentino* as a music–dance practice. It is important to me to include the voices of those I worked with, incorporating as many perspectives as feasible. To achieve this, I conversed and researched in many languages. To convey the meaning of all featured statements and citations as precise as possible and yet keep the main text easily accessible to English language readers, I added all original quotes as endnotes, while the English translations are incluced in the main text. My own voice, however, is what brings all of them together, and thereby, I knowingly become a part of the construction of the topic by adding my focus, perspective, analysis, translation, and interpretation to it.

A further aspect of my research approach is that I rely heavily on my embodied tango knowledge. Leman and Naveda have phrased that:

> The embodied viewpoint entails the idea that dancing to music is an activity that strongly relies on the coupling of action and perception, and that the human body plays an important role as a mediator that couples subjective experiences with the physical environment.
>
> (Leman and Naveda 2010, 71)

My bodily or embodied knowledge adds to my theoretical understanding of an issue and provides additional insights (Warburton 2011, 68, David 2013). I actively use my acquired knowledge for my research. Put bluntly, if I want to understand a movement or know if a recording of music is danceable, I get up and try it out. Furthermore, I also incorporated the embodied knowledge of fellow dancers. Because it is difficult to transfer physical knowledge back into words for communication, I added an experimental approach to my study to access such embodied knowledge (Stepputat 2021). I constructed a dance experiment in which participants were asked to dance to unknown tango music and respond to it by first dancing and then answering written questions. The results from this experiment, carried out in 12 different locations across Europe with more than 200 participants, provided data that I analyzed using quantitative methods.

This is one more important element of my research: the integration of qualitative and quantitative data collection in which the two areas of knowledge production complement and inform one another. On one hand, quantitative analysis needs to be based on, and informed by, expert insights, in data science also termed "domain knowledge". On the other hand, individual expert knowledge can be supported and confirmed by quantitative measures. Ideally, by combining both approaches, the insights gathered surpass those that either approach can offer alone, which is defined as transdisciplinarity. My transdisciplinary approach in this study was to combine expert knowledge from within the community with experimental approaches, generating quantitative data. In addition to the aforementioned dance experiment, the empirical elements were an online survey for tango practitioners and three recording sessions with professional tango dancers in a motion capture lab. Data from these three empirical parts are the basis for several sections of this book, but they would not make any sense without the expert interpretation of the results that enables them to be brought back into the context of active tango practice and discourse.

I begin this book with a chapter that gives an overview of *tango argentino* history throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Several such histories have been written before, but these focus on either tango dance (for instance, Benzecry Sabá 2015) or the development of tango music (Plisson 2002, Baim 2007). This is the first text that intertwines the separate narratives and focuses on both in combination, in particular the mutual influences between them, throughout their joint development. This book continues with two main parts, one focusing on tango music and its danceability, and the other on tango dance and its musicality. This structure mirrors the choreomusical approach, putting both aspects into perspective by relating them to each other.

Both chapters start with a description of the structural elements and performance practice of *tango argentino* as a basis for the further analysis. In the music part, I then move on to explore tango danceability. The first danceability section presents different approaches to definitions of *danceability* by tango DJs and tango dance teachers. Here I draw mainly on qualitative data from interviews with experts as well as my personal experiences. The following section is based on quantitative, experimental methods. I first discuss and analyze results from the online survey that asked tango practitioners to rank tango music pieces according to their danceability. I then proceed to present results from the dance experiment with new compositions for dancing that I undertook in seven European countries. The last section of the music chapter is dedicated to definitions of danceability and strategies for playing danceable tango music by contemporary musicians. Like the first section focusing on danceability, I take a qualitative approach, based on interviews with tango musicians who play music for social tango dancing.

In the following chapter on dance, I include a detailed motion capture study of the basic movement repertoire. This exploration goes beyond all previous studies of tango movement repertoire, with the aim to understand the essentials and limitations of tango movements. To this end I combine qualitative, embodied insights with quantitative measures based on motion capture recordings with professional tango dancers. The next part of the dance chapter explores tango musicality. I start with an analysis of the fundamental connection between step and beat, based on data gathered through the motion capture recording session, exploring the dancers' step–beat relations to different musical stimuli. This quantitative section is followed by two more qualitative parts. The first of these is an in-depth description and analysis of the learning processes necessary for becoming a musical tango dancer, based on a literature review and personal insights from learning and teaching tango dance. The last section presents an inventory of exemplary tango dance movements in relation to music, giving concrete insights into embodied interpretations of tango music features.

Both main chapters end with a short summary highlighting the main information and insights from each section, drawing together results from both qualitative and quantitative research. I close the book with a short conclusion focusing on the overall results, proposing answers to the question of what makes tango dancing musical and what makes tango music danceable.

Notes

1 For instance, products using the term *tango* and all that this might encompass range from footballs ("Tango Rosario" by Adidas) to chocolate ("Mango Tango" by Zotter) and electric cars ("Tango" by Commuter Cars Corporation). Prominent films making use of a tango scene are *The Scent of a Woman* (1992) and *Moulin Rouge* (2001).

2 The correct and current term for the dance and music practice described here is *tango argentino*. The denominator "argentino" is mainly used to differentiate this practice from ballroom tango or any other localized tango form, like Finnish or Italian tango. For the sake of readability, I will mainly use the short term "tango" throughout this book interchangeably with *tango argentino*. In the first chapter, I go into depth about the background of the term *tango argentino*.

3 The third important aspect of tango as art is the lyrics (see Miller 2014 for a holistic, interdisciplinary impression of tango arts practice). As my focus here is on music and dance structures, I will not elaborate on this vast area of linguistics and literature research. For an introduction to the topic, see Villariño (1965), Negro (2001), Bolasell (2011, 91–118), Zubarik (2014), and Mert (2016).

4 Included in *tango argentino* for dancing are three sub-genres: *tango vals* or *vals criollo*, *tango milonga*, and tango. *Vals,* composed in a 3/4 meter, is a mixture of the European waltz and tango, while the *tango milonga* is a tango in 2/4 meter based on *habanera* rhythm, which is faster than tango and with more emphasis on percussive elements. In this book, I do not investigate *vals* and

milonga musicality; this should be done separately. I focus on the most important and prominent tango, which is composed in a 4/4 meter.

5 Interview with Horacio Godoy, Vienna, 13 May 2014.

6 For the sake of completeness, I should mention that I have sporadically co-taught beginners tango dance classes since 2010. I also joined a tango community orchestra in Graz through a tango music workshop, playing silver flute. Unfortunately, classical tango repertoire is very limited regarding this instrument, and as I do not play a more suitable instrument for an *orchestra típica*, I did not venture further into tango music playing.

7 *Wenn es nicht gerade animiert zum Hüpfen oder sonst irgendwas . . . Also Punk zum Beispiel würde schlecht gehen, weil man da springen möchte und nicht laufen*. Interview with Anne Preuss, Halle an der Saale, 22 October 2010.

8 The research project "Tango Danceability of Music in European Perspective" was sponsored by an FWF Elise Richter stipend (V423) from 2016 to 2019. The project's website can be found at www.dancetangomusic.com/.

9 Interview with Paola de Venezia (a.k.a. Nocitango), Bad Gleichenberg, August 2019.

10 See Savigliano (1995), Liska (2016), and also Stepputat and Djebbari (2020) on the topic of political and economic issues in translocal ("global") tango practice. Also see relevant sections in the chapter on the choreomusical developments of tango music and dance.

11 There are several publications looking at the topic which gave me an important starting point to my research, including the works by Apprill (1999, 2015) and Liska (2014).

12 See Foley (2014) for examples of the negotiation of what she calls "native self" and "professional self" in fieldwork contexts involving data collection.

13 See Hitzler and Niederbacher (2010, 23–24) for insights into levels of integration into a scene, which I find suitable for the structure of the local and translocal tango community.

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2 A Choreomusical Overview of *Tango Argentino* Development 1900–2020

The term *tango argentino* can refer to either the music or the dance. If both are being talked about at the same time—regardless of which language we use—the qualifiers "music" and "dance" are required to clearly indicate which element of the genre is being addressed.

This use of the term shows how tightly connected tango music and tango dance are—or have been and are once again—as this chapter will show. Over the decades, tango dance and music have gone separate ways, developing into art forms that are self-contained.[1] Today, tango music and dance practices are diverse and range in context from professional stage performance to community practice and in terms of style from traditionalist to fusion and experimental. This chapter gives an overview of the parallel development of tango music and dance until the 1950s and follows the processes of separation in the second half of the twentieth century. It addresses political, economic, and technological issues as the causes for this development as well as influences of individual musicians and dancers where these are documented. The choreomusical approach I take focuses on the sociocultural level, looking predominantly at the larger structures and frames that have influenced the relation between tango music and dance practices. This overview provides background information, insight into mutual relations between music and dance, and an understanding of the circumstances that have influenced the development of tango dance and music into the diverse styles and practices coexisting in the twenty-first century.

Beginnings in Buenos Aires and Montevideo

Tango argentino came into being in the two major cities of the Río de la Plata delta: Montevideo in Uruguay and Buenos Aires in Argentina, both capital cities of their countries. In this overview, I start at the time of around the turn of the twentieth century, which is when the tango is considered

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to have become established in the form that is a direct ancestor of today's *tango argentino* (Collier 1992, 97; see also Torp 2014, 185–186).[2]

The tango grew out of the culturally hybrid ground that was present in Buenos Aires and Montevideo at that time. The country of Argentina prospered by focusing on agricultural exports, and while resources were plentiful, workers were not (see Hedges 2011, 24–30). A massive migration from Europe took place based on a promise of better living conditions, and former slaves as well as indigenous people from rural areas were also drawn to the new and fast-growing urban centers of the Río de la Plata.[3] These groups of people meeting in one place, and bringing their heritage and experiences with them, provided the foundation for the genesis of the tango (see Baim 2007, 13–17). There are diverse claims as to which group was more important or more involved, and the issue continues to be discussed. However, scholars generally agree that the origins of the tango are culturally hybrid (e.g. Bockelmann 2011, 586). What is certain is that the tango was at first a dance of the working classes, who lived in the poor quarters of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. From there, it gradually spread to all levels of society, until the tango as a music, dance, and literary art form achieved the status of a national genre in Argentina.

Afro-Argentinians certainly had a significant influence on the early development of the genre in terms of both music and dance (e.g., Karush 2012b, 222, Plisson 2002, 27–31, Chasteen 2004, Torp 2007, 203–215, Kusser 2013, 197–218). Although the term "tango" that was already in use at that time included dance and music practices of people of color, these practices were only slightly related to what came to be considered tango after the turn of the twentieth century. A predecessor of tango music and dance is the *candombe*, which is somewhat faster and with more emphasis on rhythmic elements. It is accompanied mainly by drums and danced with extended movements (Plisson 2002, 27–29). In older literature, which is based on racist or, more generally, prejudiced attitudes, the dance movements in *candombe* were pejoratively described as "jerky, energetic movements" or "semi-athletic contortions" (see Collier 1992, 96, 97). Today, the early tango dance style *canyengue*, which is a relative of pre-tango dance forms developed by Afro-Argentinians as well as a way to play tango more percussively, is strongly associated with the "African roots" of the tango (Plisson 2002, 115). Musicians and dancers of color continued to be among the prominent tango performers into the 1920s, most notably guitarist José Ricardo, who was the composer for and main accompanist of Carlos Gardel (Karush 2012b, 222).[4] By then, they did not have a particular role as "blacks in tango"; they were just part of the group of tango performers. In Karush's words, "tango provided Afro Argentine artists with the opportunity to express their Argentine identity, not their

blackness" (Karush 2012b, 224). Open or disguised racism in the form of categorizations and prejudices was omnipresent in Argentina in the decades around the turn of the century.[5] One reason for this is the way Argentina constructed its nationality by focusing more on the European roots of their citizens than on the mix of people present in the new country. Karush puts it in a nutshell, stating that "the well-known aphorism that 'Argentines descend from ships,' marginalized Argentines of indigenous and African descent and eventually erased them from national consciousness" (Karush 2012b, 215). A similar mechanism was responsible for "whitewashing" the *tango argentino*.[6] Over the first decades of the twentieth century, the tango music and dance practice turned into a "white", more European genre, parallel with the slow merging of people of color into Argentine society until they were no longer recognized as a distinct group of people (Plisson 2002, 23–26).

Another group that had a strong influence on tango at the turn of the century and even more so during the 1920s and 1930s were "the Italians".[7] Migration from Italy to Buenos Aires was at its peak in the second half of the nineteenth century. Italians in search of better living conditions migrated to Argentina, which needed (male) workers and was mainly interested in European settlers. Most settled in Buenos Aires, and by the early twentieth century, they made up almost a third of its population (Azzi 1996, 438). It is no surprise that many tango musicians were of Italian heritage, as the Italians represented a large percentage of the total population (see Serra 2013, 3). They brought with them their European instruments (guitar, flute, violin) and music traditions ranging from Italian folk music (including Neapolitan *canzonetta*, (Serra 2013, 3)) to opera. Many were well-trained musicians who had been educated in a music conservatory. Even if they were not involved in tango composing or in active practice, because this music was considered too "low class" (Azzi 1996, 442), they taught music theory and transcribed and notated tango tunes for others. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the tango music bears such a strong resemblance to European melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structures. The Italian influence became stronger, not only through musicians, composers, dancers, ensemble leaders, and lyricists,[8] but also through the infrastructure: Italian descendants owned many of the venues where tango was played and danced (Serra 2013, 5). As Italians made up a large number of the families living in the poor quarters of Buenos Aires, they were naturally also among the tango dancers (Serra 2013, 2). The couple dances in fashion at that time—the waltz, mazurka, schottische, polka, *habanera*—(Collier 1992, 97) had a major impact on the development of the movement repertoire, posture, and practice of tango. Benzecry Sabá quotes the anonymous columnist *Viejo Tanguero*, who wrote in 1913 that Italian immigrants were responsible for modifying the tango into a smoother form

(*tango liso*) (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 59). This statement should probably be taken with caution, as the process of changing the tango into a smoother form was complex and less related to an immigrant background than to social class, as I will argue shortly.

Another important factor that should not be overlooked was the influence of *criollo* culture. *Criollos* in Argentina are considered to be the descendants of early European settlers (dating as far back as the sixteenth century) and indigenous inhabitants (see Pinnell 1984, 244). The term *criollo* translates as "native, traditional, local" (Cara 2009, 447) and was not only used to denote a "mixed culture" but was also a term attributed to everything perceived to be of rural origin and by nature pre-migrational. In a broader sense, it gave a connotation of "Argentinianness". To identify with or as *criollo* enabled immigrants—whether from Europe, rural areas in Argentina, or descendants of former African slaves—of the nineteenth and early twentieth century to integrate into the newly built society (Cara 2009, 441). Both meanings of *criollo* are applied to the tango: it is considered to have had *criollo* (native, local) roots and was later identified as *criollo* (Argentinian),[9] as elements of many cultures had already blended into this new art form.

The *criollo* musical element considered to be of "non-migratory" origins are the songs of the *payadores*. *Payador* is a term for a man who sang improvised poetic songs for entertainment that were usually accompanied by a guitar. The *payador* tradition was most active in rural inland areas of Argentina and was brought to the port cities of the Río de la Plata by *gauchos*: cowboys either looking for work in the urban centers or accompanying cattle herds (Taylor 1976, 275). This *payador* practice changed with its surroundings, and soon a class of "urban payadors" (Bockelmann 2011, 593) developed. The (rural) *payador* singing tradition and repertoire—originally in competition with the tango as a popular music entertainment—were enhanced and combined with (urban) forms, such as *habanera*, tango, and *milonga*. Through the combination of these traditions, the tango gained musical elements, and at the same time, its popularity as urban popular music increased (Collier 1992, 98). Ángel Villoldo, called the *papá del tango criollo* (father of *tango criollo*), is a prominent figure for bringing the *criollo* element into tango—or tango into the *payador* tradition. He was an urban *payador* known for his poetry and tango compositions, the most prominent being "El Choclo" (1903) and "La Morocha" (1905). He also was a guitarist and singer, and ostensibly a "superb dancer" (Baim 2007, 25) who prominently shaped the tango in the first decade of the twentieth century.

On the hybrid foundations of the multicultural city of Buenos Aires, *criollo*, Italian—representing European music and dance traditions of the time—and the "African" elements all ultimately contributed to the early

tango mix.[10] Over time, the European element grew stronger and incorporated what was denoted as *criollo*, while the African elements faded away in a "whitewashing" process. The result was the tango of the first period, which roughly includes the decades between 1900 and 1920, which is today commonly called the *guardia vieja* (old guard). During this period, the bandoneon became the iconic instrument of the tango,[11] replacing the flute, and the piano supplanted the guitar. A sextet, composed of two bandoneons, two violins, a piano, and a double bass, became the prominent ensemble that played tango (García Brunelli 2016b, Reichardt 1984, 64). The common name of such a tango ensemble at that time was *orquesta típica criolla*.[12] The period of the *guardia vieja* is defined by several famous composers and orchestra leaders, including Rosendo Mendizábal, Alfredo Gobbi, Juan Maglio, Roberto Firpo, Eduardo Arolas, Domingo Santa Cruz, Vicente Greco, and Francisco Canaro (see Pesce 2011, Reichardt 1984, 77–90), as well as the rise of well-known dancers—the most prominent being Ovidio José Bianquet "El Cachafaz"—who took part in tango competitions, danced on stage in theatrical productions, joined orchestras in their performances, or gained fame as teachers (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 64–65).

Dissemination Through Media

Once it was formed into a genre with a name, tango music was spread by various means. Probably the oldest medium to spread tango in Argentina apart from live performances were hand-turned barrel organs called *organitos* or *organitos porteños*.[13] The barrel organ in general was the most important means of music distribution before radio broadcasting was installed (Pinsón and Nudler n.d., n.p.). Dating back to as early as the 1870s, *organitos* were usually used to play a selection of popular tunes at street corners. People gathered to listen and dance to their music (Serra 2013, 2). An early twentieth-century tango scene that is commonly described is that of a group of men practicing their tango moves to *organito* music (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 57).[14] Hence, barrel organs not only spread the music but also inspired listeners to dance to the popular tunes. How important or closely connected the *organito* and its street performances were to tango of the turn of the twentieth century becomes apparent in its incorporation into tango lyrics. Several well-known tangos make reference to *organitos* and their function, among them "Organito de la Tarde" (music: Cátulo Castillo; lyrics: José González Castillo, 1924) and "El último Organito" (music: Acho Manzi; lyrics: Homero Manzi, 1949).

A similarly important way the tango spread was through sheet music. In the time before radio broadcasts and publicly sold records, sheet music was the primary means by which tunes and their arrangements spread among

musically educated people. Scott has written about the fundamental influence printed music had on the spread of popular music in the nineteenth century, with a focus on the metropolises of Vienna, Paris, New York, and London (Scott 2008). As Buenos Aires was in close mutual contact with these metropolises and its inhabitants were culturally oriented toward those places, it can be assumed that a similar influence was present in Buenos Aires.

Veniard (1980)[15] has put together a long list of printing houses in Buenos Aires that are known to have printed sheet music of tangos. Tunes were always arranged for piano and also included lyrics. The sheet music prints often featured a content-related picture on the front cover.[16] The composer and the lyricist were credited, and the tune was often categorized as a genre, either "tango criollo" or, increasingly, just "tango" (Collier 1992, 97). An important aspect of printed sheet music was the addition of dance steps (Baim 2007, 10). With such features, sheet music was able to spread tango as music as well as tango as a dance form. Though printed dance steps might not have turned anyone into a "proper" tango dancer, they underline the idea that tango is music played not only for listening but also for dancing.

Nevertheless, the actual success of the tango needed more than local live performances, *organitos*, and sheet music: it needed the sound itself to be conveyed to people.[17] The oldest known tango recordings are the phonograph recordings of Ángel Villoldo made in Paris in 1907. Not long after this, the first recording studios were established in Argentina, which recorded "local" music mainly for a local market that was also included in international record company catalogues.[18] The four leading companies were Victor, Columbia, Brunswick (all based in the USA), and Odeon (Germany) (Karush 2012a, 45). Vicente Greco was supposedly the first to record tangos in Buenos Aires with an *orquesta típica* in 1910/1911 (Azzi 1996, 440). Although the record companies were not owned by Argentinians, the local representatives of the international companies had considerable freedom to record local acts (Karush 2012a, 45). The record labels did not just promote what was already performed; they actively shaped trends by selecting one orchestra and ignoring the other, or even contracting musicians without recording them to eliminate the competition to their main acts (Eyding 2020, 12). They also had their own orchestras play for recording sessions, for instance, the *Orquesta Típica Victor*.

While it was turned into material, reproducible recordings, tango became part of the global capitalist market for selling music, transforming it into a commodity while gaining popularity because of increased national and international dissemination. However, it is important to realize that at the time of the first recordings, the purchase of one of them—and the gramophone to play it—was a considerable investment only the rich could

afford. Only 4.5% of Argentinians were in possession of a gramophone by the mid-1920s (Karush 2012a, 60).

A medium with an even greater influence than the shellac record was the radio, which reached a much broader audience regardless of social status. From the 1920s to the early 1930s, the radio became established as a professional source of entertainment in Buenos Aires (Karush 2012a, 60). In 1927, one of the radio stations (Belgrano) introduced a new strategy for tango: instead of playing recordings, live music was broadcast, which was such a success that soon other stations had to follow (Karush 2012a, 64). Among the musicians featured on the most popular stations were tango singers and, of course, *orquestas típicas* playing tango for dancing (Karush 2012a, 65). Throughout the 1930s, as tango became even more popular, it gained a greater foothold in radio programs: in 1938, tango made up 54% of all music that was broadcast, while jazz was only 19% (Karush 2012a, 67). Tango music was local—as opposed to international—and Argentinian and, at the same time, modern and cosmopolitan, standing for the way the nation wanted to be seen. By being heard on the radio, tango performers were able to gain popularity, exploit opportunities to perform, and have an income, which certainly supported the spread of tango.

Apart from recordings, and later the radio, the tango was still played regularly by musicians at live events. The venues were designed for dancing, not for listening to tango (e.g., Collier 1992, 98), although there were exceptions where people gathered in cafés to sit and listen to tango music (Baim 2007, 41).

Theater productions that included tango performances were a medium that spread tango both as music and as dance (Goyena 1994). Tango was often portrayed in these in a comical way, either by making fun of dark-skinned people or, later, by building on clichés about Italian immigrants (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 58). Such tango performances brought tango dance to the stage, accompanied by an *orquesta típica*, and so gave the dance, together with the music, a more professional standing as stage art. This, in turn, increased the opportunities for performing the new genre but also fostered its spread as a social dance.

In these pre–moving picture times, the only way to learn to dance tango was from those who could already dance it. Tango *dancing* could not be disseminated by recordings or by the radio. In this period, tango movement repertoire and dance technique were not at all standardized, let alone institutionalized. At first, the dance spread as the music did, mostly in open spaces in and through the community: one person learned some steps from another, watching and imitating as well as trying them out with friends. Men often danced with each other, for several reasons: First, men trained by dancing with each other to improve and not risk losing face in front of women. Second, there were so many more men living in Buenos

Aires that training with men was the only way to impress the few women[19] once there was a chance of dancing with them. Finally, since there were so few women, the only way to join in with the dancing was with fellow men (Baim 2007, 27–29). Women, on the other hand, primarily learned to dance with women in private surroundings (Denniston 2007, 18).

As tango progressed into society, dance manuals started to spread (Denniston 2007, 70). According to Baim, these manuals included the same main step sequences, giving names for them, although the descriptions by the respective tango teachers differed. The most prominent step sequences were given the names *medialuna*, *ocho*, *marcha*, *rueda*, *corte*, *grapevine*, and *molinette* (Baim 2007, 85–86). Dance manuals could convey the tango only to a certain point; as is still true today, dancing is best learned through physical interaction with someone who already knows, either a teacher or a fellow dancer. Manuals helped in remembering, or adding to, previously established movement repertoire, and at the same time, they support standardization processes in the dance practice. The dance manuals from the 1910s and 1920s, which were printed and compiled in Europe and the USA, paved the way for the standardized tango that became part of the ballroom repertoire but were also well received in Argentina (Baim 2007, 96–97). Nevertheless, informal tango dance practice continued to be the main way the dance spread—most prominently in Argentina and Uruguay. Yet not all teaching and learning was "informal" in the sense of nonprofessional. As early as 1909, tango was also danced during carnival dance competitions. Tango dancers competed against each other and were judged on their individuality in style and technical skill. From reports about such competitions, we know that the presentations included figures that have remained in the standard tango repertoire until today: for instance, *medialuna*, *ocho*, and *sentada* (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 63).

The close connection between tango dance and music practice at this point is emphasized by Denniston, who states that tango "was thrown together by people who might not have shared a common verbal language, but who wanted to move together to the pretty new music being made around them" (Denniston 2007, 14). Tango music was played and recorded primarily for a dancing audience, and this main function significantly shaped the way tango music developed. Vice versa, tango dancing developed along with the musical innovations and was similarly shaped by it.

Connotations of Immorality

Milonguitas were important and mostly overlooked people regarding the spread of the tango as social dance probably already in the 1910s, and most definitely from the 1920s onward. A *milonguita* was a "dance hall

girl", or "the woman who numbered among their other talents the ability to dance tango" (Taylor 1976, 280). *Milonguitas* were not considered respectable women, and many sad tango lyrics paint a vivid picture of the tragic events and broken hearts associated with despicable *milonguitas*, for instance, "Esthercita" (1920) or "Santa Milonguita" (1933). *Milonguitas* played their part in the spread of tango because, on the one hand, men had to be able to dance tango to be with a *milonguita*, and on the other hand, this gave women who were good tango dancers a way to earn money. At that time, "women had far fewer choices of ways to earn a living than the men. Prostitution, including white slavery, was the unfortunate fate of many" (Baim 2007, 20). Although dancing with men for money was still considered inappropriate, it was a step up from plain prostitution that gave women at least some income. Dancing tango to get close to a woman—however immoral it might have been perceived—advanced the spread of the dance and furthered the dancing skills of individuals of both genders.

To understand why the tango was considered immoral or at least inappropriate, we need to take into consideration the prevalent conception of morality in the first decade of the twentieth century.[20] For the greater part of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, social elites, often influenced by the Christian Church, considered dancing as "wicked" and even dangerous to the mind in encouraging people to stray away from proper, moral behavior. The higher one's status in society, the more intense were such ideas. Corporeality was often sexualized, particularly if connected to the female gender (see Liska 2014, 38). In general, the louder, faster, and more rhythmic the music and the movements, and the more physical contact between the dancers, the more likely a dance was considered immoral.

Tango qualified as immoral in several ways, especially in its early phase. It was one of the first widespread couple dances in Euro-American societies in which the dancers had physical contact beyond the hands and arms, which was shocking, especially to people from European society. Considered particularly immoral was the asymmetrical hold—one arm embracing, the other holding the hand of the dance partner—that was first introduced into society through the waltz and adopted for the polka and mazurka as they spread from Europe to other continents and countries, including Argentina (Denniston 2007, 14). The tango followed suit, with one addition: this dance has no sequences of steps and no rules when to dance what steps in relation to the music (Denniston 2007, 83–84). Instead of repeating learned step sequences, dancers improvised based on a set movement repertoire in connection with clear rules for leading and following.

The *cortes* (cuts) and *quebradas* (breaks) were part of the movement repertoire of turn-of-the-century tango that contributed to its disrespectability: what exactly those movements were is not entirely clear, but some

depictions in dance manuals give an impression.[21] Based on such historical descriptions, a *corte* was a sharp, sudden movement by the leader against the flow of the dance, often a backward step, whereas, more descriptive of the intention, a *corte* was a "breaking the flow" of the joint dance, during which the leader could be seen "making flourishes" while the follower rested in a pose (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 23). The *quebrada* is not a movement but a position in which the follower bends backward or sideways above waist level into a held position (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 23). *Quebradas* could be the result of a *corte*, but not all *cortes* ended in *quebradas*. *Cortes* were connected to early tango music as a physical interpretation of musical breaks. When the dance became more established, musicians had to refrain from playing musical cuts to avoid the physical responses considered unrespectable:

> According to what we can reconstruct and interpret, the procedure consisted of the abrupt and unexpected inflection of the rhythmic regularity in the course of a phrase, by means of the prolongation of a sound or tremolo played by the flute or violin. This pause had a specific functionality for the dance, which was to enable the playful and erotic moment. In this framework produced from music, the famous "cortes" and "quebradas" of the body were made, that is, the movements that were prohibited and later eliminated from the choreography. The musical cuts were eliminated with the intention of avoiding the provocative movements in the dance.
>
> (Liska 2014, 40)[22]

By the 1920s, *cortes* were no longer part of the tango movement repertoire. The music and the movements needed to change so that the tango could become more respectable overall. This transformation is closely connected to the first appearance of tango in Paris as well as the very hierarchical structures of Argentinian society at that time.

Reciprocation with Europe: The Way into High Society

Some sources provide a definite date for the first appearance of tango in Europe as 1907, when Ángel Villoldo came to Europe to perform and record tango together with the couple Alfredo Eusebio Gobbi (singer, composer, acrobat, and dancer) and Flora Rodríguez de Gobbi (singer, theater performer, and dancer). There is no question that this was an important moment for tango music performances in Europe, but it is only one instance among many that were maybe not so prominent. Tango music and dance spread to Europe through several channels, involving many people, over a long period. Tango dancing became popular through performances as well as individual teaching and learning and as part of professional classes

in dance schools. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, especially (Latin-looking, handsome) male tango dance teachers were in great demand in Paris, which caused many young Argentinian men to go to Paris to earn good money quickly, as well as numerous other professional dancers who could not claim Argentinian heritage, to "manufacture their own exotic image" (Knowles 2009, 113).[23] Many Argentinian musicians who came to France were also skilled dancers who performed and taught music as well as dance movements (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 67). The new dance and music took Parisian society by storm, and shortly afterward, "tangomania"[24] started: the tango became a vogue that influenced all aspects of Parisian cultural life, from clothing to food and dance events, the most prominent being the "afternoon tango tea". Any product or event with the term "tango" attached to it could automatically be sold (Denniston 2007, 82, also Cooper 1995). Internationally, tango music spread most intensely through recordings by the large record companies that first invited tango musicians to record in Paris. Later, imported recordings from Argentina also contributed to its dissemination. Argentinian musicians came to perform in Europe; in certain cases, their great success resulted in them staying for a considerable time (Munarriz 2015, 65). At the same time, local music ensembles started to incorporate tango compositions into their repertoire, and soon some local groups specialized entirely in tango music (Munarriz 2015, 61).

It can only be speculated why the tango reached such a prominence and degree of dissemination in and through Europe at this time. One of the main reasons is certainly the longing for the "exotic" in dance and music, which the tango could provide with its heavy emphasis on the "Latin" and/or "Argentinian" connotation (Denniston 2007, 82, also see Savigliano 1995). In addition, the individuality and improvisation of tango, where the two dancers in a couple carry out different steps at the same time, were previously unknown and considered attractive. Finally, the asymmetrical close hold and intense bodily contact needed for the joint improvisation certainly delighted dancers (Denniston 2007, 82).

Paris at that time was the cultural hub in Europe. What was *en vogue* there quickly spread and influenced other European capitals and cities.[25] The tango also continued to spread to other continents via Europe.[26] For instance, *tango argentino* (both music and dance) initially arrived in Japan in the 1920s and continued to flourish there during the years when it fell into decline in Argentina (see following text), thus providing a profitable source of income for touring tango musicians from Argentina (Fares 2015, 182, 186–187). Tango dancers and musicians who had lived in Paris as early as the 1910s were responsible for importing tango dancing and music into North America and the United States (Groppa 2010, 25, Knowles 2009, 115–117), where the first tango rage in the USA started in 1913.[27]

The tango did not stay simply "the" *tango argentino*. Variants of tango developed and were re-localized into regional and national forms, leading to new interpretations and meanings. Local forms of the tango developed in many countries, mixed with local musics and dance forms, and in some cases developed into translocal genres in their own right. The most prominent example is unquestionably the tango form known today as ballroom tango, which developed in England and became part of international ballroom dance practice (Knowles 2009, 114–115). Another localized form with distinct music and dance practice is the Finnish tango, whose development has been summarized by Padilla (2014) and Kukkonen (2000). The development of the Italian tango, including both the music and dance, was traced by Cámara de Landa (2015). Pelinski has called the phenomenon of tango in re-localized contexts the "nomad tango" (*tango nomade*) and sees it as an expression and metaphor of globalization (Pelinski 2000, 2000a).

In addition to localizations and the genesis of new tango dance and music genres, the export of tango to Europe, and its reception there, also shaped tango practice in Argentina. The oldest known and preserved dance manual by Nicanor Lima, which is dated about 1914–1916, is a prominent document for tango after its journey to Europe and into society.[28] It is an important source that shows how the movements of tango were captured and thereby standardized. In addition to such standardization, the repertoire was changed by selection. *Cortes* still appear in this manual, but in a way that bears little resemblance to earlier descriptions of the "immoral" and "exaggerated" movements. Tango movements needed to be "corrected" and made more "hygienic" in order to be fully accepted by an aristocratic elite society in Paris, also in other European metropolises, and thus in Buenos Aires (Liska 2014, 29, 30). This included the transformation of *cortes* and *quebradas* into set step sequences, with movements made more smoothly and less abruptly, and the backward bends being omitted either completely or at least reduced to a slight bend. In addition, all dance movements started to be carried out much more slowly (Liska 2014, 30).

Another change in musical structures that influenced the dance—or vice versa—was the slowing down of the absolute tempo. The music had to be slowed down so as to dance in a morally appropriate way, because the general opinion was that the lower the overall speed, the easier it would be to control the movements (Liska 2014, 42).

All these changes were made to permit the tango to be acceptable in high society in accordance with the standards of appropriateness of the central European bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, anti-tango sentiment in Europe ran high almost as soon as it started to spread, as documented in newspaper articles of the time in both Europe and the USA (see Baim 2007, 55–66). Such "moral" reactions were heavily influenced by spokespersons for Christian churches, including the pope (Pope Pius X; see Goertzen and

Azzi 1999, 68). Many incidents of church officials condemning the tango have been reported in different European countries (Knowles 2009, 124–125, Baim 2007, 62–65). Yet all those sentiments against the tango could not stop the interest in the dance, and to some extent, they may even have played into the hands of the new genre: forbidden things that promise pleasure are always more attractive.

The Reception of Tango in Argentina

In the 1910s, Buenos Aires was struggling with the class differences of a capitalist system in a growing economy, and while the political aim for society was for social consensus, the classes were divided culturally and economically. Arising in the lower working classes, the tango could not make its way directly into the upper classes. An outside evaluation was needed first (see Goertzen and Azzi 1999, 68), and second, a twist to make it acceptable. Liska (2014) sees the way tango turned into a "national genre" as a metaphor for the development of Argentinian society: the art form was valued because of the desire to be "inclusive" of all social strata within Argentina as a nation-state, but at the same time, the tango was still judged as something of lower origin. The acceptance of tango into Parisian society gave an outside valuation, which in turn "made the Buenos Aires bourgeoisie accept it as a condescending gesture towards those who had created it" (Liska 2014, 28).[29] The change that tango dancing—and, to some extent, the music as well—underwent in Paris in the 1910s helped this approval.

In the late 1910s, the smoother, slower tango that returned from Paris to Buenos Aires initiated a discourse in Argentina about this new style, which was no longer considered to be the original. The columnist Viejo Tanguero, for instance, described the new style as "alien", a "new world dance", but not the "real tango" anymore (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 68). However, the new style had become so established and accepted by the aristocracy on both sides of the Atlantic that there was no turning back to *cortes* and *quebradas* and the faster music with breaks and improvisations. Albeit critical of the new development, Argentinian society accepted the Parisian version of tango that had been made respectable through the changes in movement repertoire and posture. The standardization of the new style continued, supported by famous tango dancers and performers, who now became teachers with respectable dance schools in Buenos Aires (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 71). By the time the First World War started, the tango had become fully established.

Apart from the establishment of tango as music to dance to, the tango also made its way onto the stage to be appreciated as concert music for listening separately from dancing. This tango tradition, which emphasized

the lyrics and the singer as a performer, drew more intensely from the *payador* tradition and came to be known as *tango canción*. An instance often reported to be the starting point of this genre is the 1917 recording of "Mi Noche Triste" (music: Samuel Castriota; lyrics: Pascal Contursi) by Carlos Gardel, the most prominent tango singer of all time (Barsky and Barsky 2004, Navitski 2011). *Tango canción* fostered the development of tango as a poetic genre. This genre stood in opposition to the tango dance music tradition. In *tango canción*, the tango singer is supported by the orchestra and has considerable freedom in tempo, phrasing, and rhythmic interpretation. In contrast, a singer in a dance orchestra is considered another instrument of the group and must fit their singing into the music played by the orchestra (Plisson 2002, 78–79). This development toward staged *tango canción* relates to the bourgeois acceptance of tango: a shift in value toward the lyrics was seen as far more respectable than low-class tango dancing, and its "un-danceability" (*no bailabilidad*) was the most important feature of acceptable tango (Liska 2014, 32, 33). This point in its development is probably the first moment in which a new, dance-free tango style emerged. *Tango canción* instantly took off as a separate tango genre, practiced and appreciated in parallel to tango dance music.

Finally, the tango changed its denotation from *tango criollo* to *tango argentino* after its transatlantic voyage. In Europe, the new vogue was associated with the nation-state Argentina because the main tango protagonists spreading the music and the dance were Argentinians.[30] Thereby, Uruguay—unjustly—became dissociated from the tango (Bockelmann 2011, 585). At the same time, the tango in Argentina was reclaimed as "national and criollo" (Liska 2014, 30) after the changes it underwent in Europe and its reinvention as authentically Argentinian. Record companies supported this by fostering the connotation of the tango as "Argentinian" and "national", using it as a marketing tool for selling tango recordings (Karush 2012a, 51).

From Guardia Nueva *to* Época De Oro

In Argentina, the 1920s saw the further rise of tango in all social strata, and by 1925, tango made up 90% of total phonograph record sales (Karush 2012a, 53). Tango was successful because the genre united the cosmopolitan and the Argentinian, the modern and the traditional, the urban and the rural, and thereby stood for everything the Argentine nation aspired to be associated with (Karush 2012a, 53).

In this time of rising fame for tango, a new generation of musicians shaped musical structures into more harmonic and melodic complexity, paving the way for the large orchestras of the 1930s. Today this generation is called the *guardia nueva*, the new guard. Among musicians and

orchestra leaders, such as Osvaldo Fresedo and Juan Carlos Cobián, the most prominent and long-term influential of this period is Julio De Caro, who composed and arranged music in a much more complex way concerning the use of harmony, counterpoint, dynamics, and virtuosity (see Link and Wendland 2016, 143–144). Many members of the Sexteto Julio De Caro went on to become prominent figures in tango in their own right (Plisson 2002, 92). Yet most importantly, De Caro laid the musical foundation for the tango of Aníbal Troilo and Osvaldo Pugliese. This more sophisticated way to compose, arrange, and play complex tango was not primarily suited to dancers' needs, yet orchestras of the so-called De Caro school performed for *milongas* in large dance halls nevertheless (also see Denniston 2007, 68). In addition to the new musical complexity, the transition from the *guardia nueva* to the golden era of tango is also signified by the musical experimentation of the *orquestas típicas* of the time.[31] This included incorporating new instruments, broadening the repertoire to music from other genres, and enlarging the *orquesta típica* sound into what Garcia Brunelli calls "symphonic tango" (2016, 329). In addition, the absolute tempo of tango recordings rose again from the average 120 to up to 140 bpm (García Brunelli 2016a, 329). Most of these trends were short-lived, and after some experimenting, *orquestas* focused again on catering to a dancing crowd without losing the music complexity gained from the *guardia nueva* (García Brunelli 2016a, 341).

This trend was illustrated most prominently, but certainly not exclusively, by the orchestra of Juan D'Arienzo. Mirrored in his nickname *el rey del compás* (the king of rhythm), he was, and still is, praised for his rhythmic clarity that gives tango dancers a clear and inspiring basis for their improvisations. Other orchestras followed successfully in his wake, for instance, Rodolfo Biagi and Ricardo Tanturi (Martin 2014, 91). After D'Arienzo, Carlos Di Sarli is the second name mentioned most often in connection with the danceable music of the 1930s and 1940s (Link and Wendland 2016, 196–199). Di Sarli is known for his melodic lines and a "romantic" or "lyrical" approach to tango dance music without any loss of the underlying stable rhythmic structures that are important for danced tango interpretations.[32]

The years during and after the Second World War were economically stable times for Argentina, thanks to its neutrality in the war and its status as an important agricultural exporter (Plisson 2002, 97). This economic stability was followed by relative social and political stability. Better living and working conditions for the working class enabled a larger part of the society to participate in "urban culture and leisure activities" (Krüger 2012, 54), which led to a rise in tango music and dance activities. Tango continued to be omnipresent in society not only as a leisure dance but also as an important, socially sanctioned playground for matchmaking.

Denniston collected anecdotes of tango dancers who started to learn tango in the 1930s. All the men she had consulted unanimously said that if they had not started dancing the tango, their chances of "getting a girlfriend were practically nonexistent" (Denniston 2007, 18).

The time from the mid- to late 1930s to 1955 is known as the *época de oro* (golden age) of tango. In the 1940s, hundreds of tango orchestras regularly played at countless crowded *milonga* venues (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 95–96). Dancers regularly practiced and learned at private or professional dance rehearsal meetings, called *prácticas* (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 98–99), often from dancers of the same gender (Carozzi 2015, 140–144). Tango was broadcast on the radio, and a large number of records were made and sold. *Orquestas típicas* grew in size, multiplying the instrumentation of the strings and bandoneon sections and developing the full orchestral sound aesthetics associated with tango music of the *época de oro*. It is also this time in tango music development that the role of the arranger, whose responsibility was to arrange the instrumentation of the tango compositions for an orchestra, gained the importance and status that it still has today (Martin 2014, 91). In 1924, Canaro had started a new trend by adding a singer to his orchestra (called orchestra singers, or *estribillista*, "refrain singer", see Pinsón and García Blaya n.d., n.p.), not as the main act, as in *tango canción*, but instead as a supporting voice that more closely followed the tempo and phrasing of the orchestra and only sang a part of the overall composition. In the *época de oro*, this feature became even more important and favored by the dancing crowds up to the point that in advertisements for *milongas*, orchestra leaders were identified alongside the name of their main singer.

With the growing reception of the tango, record companies became busy recording tangos, and the sheer quantity of tango tracks also caused a certain stagnation or repetition of musical formulas that had proven to be successful and popular with the dancers (Karush 2012a, 58). Tango music is said to have become "limited" to be music for accompanying dancing and singing (Krüger 2012, 56). Another perspective on the same issue, though, is that tango orchestra leaders, composers, and arrangers had mastered the art of writing and playing danceable tango music to perfection. Dancers did not want to listen to simple music. In fact, tango musicians effectively started to explore musical options that "fuelled the imagination and creativity" (Denniston 2007, 73) of the dancers. The dance repertoire was broadened to incorporate innovations such as *cruzado* (the cross) and *salida* (exit, or way out), which were not always approved of by the older generation of tango dancers in the 1930s and 1940s (Denniston 2007, 72). As a result of these new movement options, possibilities for improvisation were expanded and were matched by subtle nuances in the music which dancers could take as inspiration for their improvisations (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 99).

At dance events, prominent tango dancers started to perform to live music. These outstanding tango performers of the *época de oro* then also taught at *prácticas* and thereby had a strong individual influence on the further development of the style (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 98). The two most well-known were Carmen Micaela Riso de Cancellieri, called "Carmencita Calderón" (see Otero 2002), and "El Cachafaz" Ovidio José Bianquet (Pinsón n.d.), who presented tango show dances, taught tango dance, and starred in films of the 1930s. Cinema and the rise of sound movies also influenced the growing popularity of tango.[33] At first, tango music accompanied silent movies. With the advent of sound movies, films used the popular tango as a topic in its own right and featured well-known tango orchestras and tango dancers.[34] In addition, the popular tango singer Carlos Gardel starred in seven Paramount movies for Spanish-speaking markets (Navitski 2011, 29). His involvement in the film industry not only furthered his career but also was essential for spreading tango nationally and internationally. While Gardel's main contribution was singing *tango canción* and acting, he is also seen dancing tango in two of his films (*Cuesta Abajo* and *Tango Bar*) (Navitski 2011, 35). His first film, *Las Luces de Buenos Aires*, was released in 1931, and soon other films about tango followed, most importantly *¡Tango!* (1933), the first feature film produced in Argentina with synchronized dialogue and optical sound (Navitski 2011, 43, Karush 2012a, 75). *¡Tango!* was prototypical of films to come in subsequent years, as it featured important musicians, dancers, songs, and compositions that are today considered "classics" of *época de oro* tango. It presented tango as music for listening in *tango canción* performances as well as tango music for dancing at *milongas*. The stars of the film included Libertad Lamarque, the most prominent female tango singer in the 1930s (Karush 2012a, 109–115), as well as Tita Merello, Mercedes Simone, and Azucena Manzani, three well-known tango singers. The film also included the musicians Juan D'Arienzo, Juan de Dios Filiberto, Edgardo Donato, Osvaldo Fresedo, and Pedro Maffia (and their orchestras).[35] Finally, the film features several dance scenes, including *milonga* situations as well as a tango performed by Carmencita Calderón and El Cachafaz.

Political, economic, media, and social influences came together to generate the *época de oro* of tango music and dance. Benzecry Sabá sums up the circumstances perfectly, writing that:

> The slowdown of import during the War, increased purchasing power, the protection of public authorities, the spread of radio and records, the proliferation of places to dance, new authors, composers, and orchestras of higher musical quality, all put the dance on the road toward what would become known as "The Golden Age".
>
> (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 97)

Decline Under Economic and Political Pressure

The *época de oro* came to an end in the mid-1950s. This was not simply caused by the regular fading of a vogue but was mainly triggered by economic and international events. The Argentinian economy experienced a period of stagnation, which caused wages to fall. With less money to spend, customers could not afford the costs of going out to dance regularly. With fewer clients, nightclubs and cabarets had to close and could no longer afford to pay the large *orquestas típicas*. Bandleaders, in turn, could not afford to keep all the members of their orchestras (Karush 2012a, 200). Parallel to this, audiences became more interested in dancing and listening to rock 'n' roll music imported from North America, and the Argentinian *rock nacional* (Luker 2007, 72, Manzano 2014). Additionally, folk music from Argentina gained renewed interest as part of the "folklore movement" (Karush 2012a, 160). Tango musicians, on the other hand, continued to play music for listening in smaller ensembles (Karush 2012a, 200). Some tango musicians ventured in new directions away from tango played by *orquestas típicas* for dancers toward tango *vanguard*.[36] This ultimately led to *tango nuevo*, whose name was coined by Astor Piazzolla and which incorporates different instruments, genres, and composition techniques (Azzi and Collier 2000). In the long run, the *vanguard* development of *tango nuevo* caused "a deep rupture in the musical and historical trajectory of the genre" (Luker 2007, 72).[37]

Dancing tango in the 1960s was no longer a fashion; it was an outdated, nostalgic practice that only people who had learned tango dancing in the 1930s took part in (Luker 2007, 72). In the 1960s, concerts for listening and private clubs concerned with the study of tango lyrics as an Argentinian art form dominated tango practice (Taylor 1976, 288). After 1960, only a few tango dancers continued to dance at all, and there were hardly any dancers starting to learn, least of all those of a younger generation (Carozzi 2015, 134, Benzecry Sabá 2015, 160). However, the few committed *milongueros* kept up their practice. Benzecry Sabá quotes *milonguero* Carlos Anzuate, who actively danced throughout the 1960s with the words "people exaggerate. You knew where you had to go to dance" (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 148).

In this respect, the 1960s were the time when tango music of the *orquesta típica* tradition and tango dance started to separate. Those who still danced became accustomed to dancing to recorded tango music from the *época de oro*. The record player provided the music both in private and public dance gatherings, which was the beginning of tango DJing as a profession but the end of dancing to live music as the norm (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 157).[38] The separation of tango music and dance in this period was furthered by the increasing spread and influence of television[39] and its mediation of music

separated from dancing (Carozzi 2015, 149). With time, watching television in the evening became a preferred pastime that replaced going out, for instance to dance tango (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 152).

In 1976, Taylor wrote the following about the condition of tango in Buenos Aires: "A favorite Argentine national pastime consists of debate over the supposed demise or latest claim to revival of the national dance. Is the tango already dead?" (Taylor 1976, 273) In retrospect, we know that tango did not experience a revival until decades later. On the contrary, political developments within Argentina caused tango to declined even further. Taylor undertook her study of tango in 1966 and 1967, a time that had already seen a *coup d'état* and political instability in Argentina, but could not have anticipated the horrors of the "Period of the Generals" (1976–1983). This period was characterized by violence, torture, repression, and the disappearance of countless Argentine citizens. Bolasell calls this time the hibernation period (*período de hibernación*) of social tango dancing (Bolasell 2011, 161), as during the military regime, going out in the evenings was dangerous because the police randomly detained citizens; hence, nobody wanted to risk detention by going to a *milonga* (Carozzi 2015, 147).

Tango dancing for staged shows, though, was still possible. Cara accordingly states that "this was a time for gazing at staged performances of tango and listening to tango musicians, without engaging in the dance" (Cara 2009, 444). Two prominent names of the time are Juan Carlos Copes and María Nieves, who produced "tango ballet" shows and appeared on television inside and outside of Argentina (Merritt 2012, 40).[40] Tango dancing as a social practice was hibernating, but tango music continued to be played, if not in exile,[41] then in a very limited way and subject to censorship.[42]

Cultural, media, economic, and above all, political factors caused a major rift in the tango tradition. The period of more than 20 years between the *época de oro* and the end of the military regime in 1983 was critical in separating tango dance from tango music and developing them further into independent practices. Tango music turned into music for listening and developed into an artistic genre for staged performances with sophisticated compositions and interpretations. Tango dancing turned into "tango for watching" (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 175) in professional shows, while social tango dancing fell into decline and was no longer practiced in public.

The 1980s: Local and International Revival

The end of the military regime and return to democracy in 1983 marked a fresh beginning for *tango argentino*, or perhaps more accurately a waking up from hibernation to begin to move again.

Argentina was busy rebuilding as a nation-state. Since the tango—both music and dance—had not been exploited by the regime, it was available to be adopted as a national tradition with which Argentinians could identify (Cara 2009, 450). Negative connotations of old-fashionedness and conservatism that might have been prevalent in the eyes of the younger generation in the 1960s were long past, allowing a revival (Luker 2016, 71). Musicians and singers of the older generation were still active and began to prosper again. For instance, in 1983, tango singer Susana Rinaldi—in exile in France since 1976—published a CD on which she used the lyrics to speak out freely, "reclaiming a voice for Argentinians" through tango singing (Cara 2009, 448). Osvaldo Pugliese, one of the most famous composers, musicians, and *orquesta* leaders of the golden age, experienced a new appreciation for his art: in the 1970s and 1980s, he continued to tour and perform outside Argentina, where he had been imprisoned for political reasons several times and banned from the radio. However, he never ceased to receive support from his audience. He was celebrated even more in the 1980s and performed in Buenos Aires again at the spectacular 1985 concert at the Teatro Colón.[43] Similarly, pianist and orchestra leader Horacio Salgán started a second career in the 1980s (Link and Wendland 2016, 201–204), as did bandoneonist Leopoldo Federico, who had mainly performed outside Argentina in the 1970s (Link and Wendland 2016, 265–269).

Catering to the new and renewed interest, tango music was increasingly produced on compact discs in Argentina for international markets and labelled "for export". These productions catered to the taste of a non-Argentinian audience, using cliché images of tango dancers on the covers, and included mainly tango music for listening of the 1950s onward instead of earlier tango dance music repertory. These productions were complemented by reissued recordings from the 1930s to 1950s aimed at local and regional markets (Goertzen and Azzi 1999, 71). The availability of tango music recordings and the re-emergence of tango musicians from the 1950s in Argentina laid the foundation for the renovation of tango that started in the 1990s and was propelled by a new generation of musicians. Internationally, tango gained popularity through the music of Astor Piazzolla. Piazzolla toured extensively, and his compositions were adapted by a wide variety of international musicians. However, the legendary show called *Tango Argentino*, a staged tango revue that introduced music of the *época de oro*, albeit in a more contemporary interpretation, was maybe even more influential.

The show premiered in Paris the same year as the military regime collapsed. Most authors view this performance as the starting point of the renewed interest in tango music and dance by an international and Argentinian audience. *Tango argentino* was arranged following the revue

traditions of the 1960s. The show combined live music with a succession of show dancing numbers, illustrating the historical development of *tango argentino*. Argentinians Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli produced the show; the famous couples María Nieves and Juan Carlos Copes, Carlos Rivarola and María Rivarola, and Nelson Ávila and Nélida Rodríguez were among the many dancers. Sexteto Mayor and Horacio Salgán provided the music (Gazenbeek 2013).[44] In Paris, Roberto Goyeneche was included as a singer. After the successful premiere, the show toured Europe and was performed on Broadway in 1985. The production continued to tour Europe, the USA, and Japan with a rotating cast. It was a huge success everywhere, and wherever it played, "it left behind it a small but enthusiastic group of people determined to learn to dance Tango" (Denniston 2007, 94). Local clubs in many countries started to organize *tango argentino* workshops and classes. The time for international tango travel had arrived: tango teachers from Argentina were invited to teach abroad, and enthusiastic students started to travel to Buenos Aires to learn tango dancing there.[45] This interest in tango by foreign devotees made it necessary to establish a tango infrastructure of teaching and dance events in the "tango Mecca" of Buenos Aires catering to their needs.[46]

The following years saw the emergence of the second international "tangomania", with reference to a renewed international interest in both the music and the dance. The rebirth of tango in Argentina significantly depended on the growing interest of an audience from outside Argentina (Bolasell 2011, 161).[47] At the same time, in Buenos Aires, *milongas* reopened, and younger, local people became interested in tango dancing. After 1983, tango was taught at newly established community centers as part of the government strategy to revive social and cultural life in Buenos Aires (Merritt 2012, 42, Carozzi 2015, 152–155). Gustavo Naveira was one of those community center teachers. Although he had only started to dance tango in 1981, he would soon become a main protagonist in the tango dance style *neotango*. Naveira was a student of Rodolfo Dinzel,[48] a *milonguero* of the *época de oro* (Merritt 2012, 42). Because of the generation gap, a tango dance community had to be rebuilt upon the knowledge of the older *milongueros* of the golden age who still danced or had started to dance again. Interest was great, and *milongueros* were few, which caused a profound change in tango teaching and learning. Where students once went through apprenticeships and learned mainly by dancing with experienced dancers at *milongas* and *prácticas*, now classes were organized. This resulted not only in different ways of learning but also in another understanding, categorizing, and marketing of tango dance. The 1980s also laid the foundation for the diversification of tango dance "styles" as a commodity.[49] Dancers soon realized that the new approach of learning in classes through verbal explanations and copying the teacher was much less

beneficial than learning in an embodied way through practice (Denniston 2007, 96–97). As a result of this experience, dancers in the 1980s started to re-establish *prácticas*. At such training evenings, dancers of the *época de oro* who were still active could dance with younger aspiring dancers and share their knowledge through dancing and not by explaining (Denniston 2007, 99). The problem, though, was that even though *prácticas* were re-established, there was a lack of experienced and skilled dance teachers, which led to overcrowded classes. Dancers with no teaching experience were thrown into the role of a teacher, and some of them had little experience in socially danced tango because they had mainly danced in staged tango shows during the recent decade. Probably for this reason, many teachers chose to teach sequences or whole choreographies, such as those found in staged tango, instead of focusing on the improvisatory aspect of social tango dancing (Carozzi 2015, 153).

The tango performed on stage was related to, but not the same as, socially danced tango at *milongas*. Staged tango built on the aesthetics of early tango revues and performances (Cara 2009, 442). The style of staged tango became more and more detached from social tango through its use of choreography, including elaborate and fast footwork created to impress an audience. Dance shows include exaggerated movements and prominently displayed emotions for visual effects. In the 1980s, just as music had become tagged "for export", staged tango dance received the label "for export" when the aim was to perform for an audience with no background in tango (Cara 2009, 441). Other terms used for staged tango are *tango fantasía* (fantasy tango) or now most commonly *tango escenario* (stage tango).

Escenario-style aesthetics performed in tango shows influenced not only how a European audience perceived *tango argentino* but also how European tango dancers wanted to dance. Having never seen socially danced tango at a *milonga*, the staged tango was what the audience thought to be "the" Argentinian tango. In the 1980s and 1990s, many aspiring tango dancers in Europe wanted to dance with fast, fancy figures and movements. Accordingly, teachers put an emphasis on technique and small choreographed elements in the dance (see also Apprill 1999, 72). Consequently, *tango argentino* as a social dance in Europe adopted a more space-consuming movement repertoire with elaborate leg movements.

Parallel to this change in dance movement repertoire, tango dancers outside Argentina often trained by dancing to a variety of tango music not necessarily produced for dancing. This was the result of a lack of information as well as a lack of resources: the few recordings of *época de oro* tango available on the international market at that time (Goertzen and Azzi 1999, 71) were overshadowed by the "for export" CDs produced for an international market with music that was conceptualized for concert

situations rather than tango dance settings. The lack of suitable recordings and the total absence of tango musicians capable of playing for tango dancers outside Argentina furthered the separation of the dance from the music in translocal contexts (Stepputat and Djebbari 2020). Similarly, the tango musicians and singers in Argentina who had once performed for dancers had stopped playing for them over the years for economic and political reasons or due to aesthetic choice as representatives of tango *vanguard*.

The 1990s: Renovación, Tango Nuevo, and Translocal Establishment

What had started in the 1980s gained momentum in the 1990s: a massive trend upward in awareness, interest, knowledge, and skill in tango which, in addition, led to both tango music and dance diversifying further.

Internationally, although he himself died in 1992, Astor Piazzolla's fame continued to increase. His recordings, and interpretations of them by diverse musicians, were well-known and liked by a broad audience (Goertzen and Azzi 1999, 73). In his wake came other tango ensembles and countless interpreters from other genres who added single tango pieces to their repertoires. The presence of tango became constant in film, television, and advertisements both as background music and as a stereotypical "passionate" dance (see Ochoa 2003). Toward the turn of the century, two films reached an international audience that many tango dancers of today claim sparked their interest in tango: Sally Potter's *The Tango Lesson* (1997) and Carlos Saura's *Tango* (1998). Both these films focus on tango in general and feature renowned tango dancers and musicians of the time. They increased interest in the tango, but they were also an expression of prior interest in the art form.

In Argentina, the tango also received more attention, as summed up by Goertzen and Azzi:

> The tango is now undergoing a renaissance in Argentina. As the middle class refocuses attention on the tango, dance studios are proliferating and newspaper coverage of tango events is increasing; a new television station devoted exclusively to the tango now supplements the all-tango radio station.
>
> (Goertzen and Azzi 1999, 72)

Two fundamental events that would continue to shape *tango argentino* significantly until today took place in the 1990s: the *renovación* (renovation, renewal) movement in music and the developments toward *tango nuevo* or *neotango* (both terms meaning "new tango") in dance. Tango dance reappeared slightly faster than the music. Peralta speculates that "tango music requires deep knowledge to sustain itself and needed more study time to return" (Peralta 2014, 189).[50]

In the 1990s, a sufficient number of younger dancers in Buenos Aires had acquired enough skill to mingle and mix with dancers of the older generation and form a diverse dance community again (Denniston 2007, 98). At the same time, this generational gap caused mutual resentments concerning dance style and practice, which hindered the development of a homogenous and integrated community (Carozzi 2015, 157, Liska 2017, 5–6). In the meantime, in addition to the older dancers who also taught classes, younger dancers like Gustavo Naveira who had started dancing in the 1980s had also built a reputation as teacher (Denniston 2007, 99). The Argentinian government officially supported tango practice, community centers continued to offer free courses, and tango dancing was also taught as extracurricular classes in universities (Liska 2017, 2, 4). Through this growing interest and practice, "once again, dances became part of urban geography" (Liska 2017, 1).

At this time, a major shift in teaching methods occurred. Students became more interested in improvisational elements apart from the presentational and "showy" technical aspects. This new exploration of tango, therefore, began with dancers becoming disinterested in reproducing steps, sequences, and figures. Following this rejection, tango dance moved in two major directions: one toward movement exploration and innovation and a broadening of the repertoire packaged as *neotango*, and the other toward a reduction of steps and a focus on the intimate connection between the couple, the style designated as *milonguero*. The *tango de salón*,[51] as it is known today, also developed out of this exploration. Compared to the others, this style concentrated most on stage aesthetics while also departing from set sequences (see Morel 2011, 204).

What was later termed as *neotango* began with experimentations with the tango movement repertoire. Gustavo Naveira and Fabián Salas are the most important names connected with this. Dancers started to deconstruct the movement repertoire to build it up again and understand its principles and, more concretely, the bodily dynamics that made jointly improvised tango dancing possible. This striving to discover basic bodily concepts in tango, and consequently, the development of a new and more liberal corporeality, has been linked to the "de-corporealization" of the tango in the 1910s by European dance masters (Pelinski 2000a, 257).

From this "movement revolution" in tango, individual teaching methods, styles, repertoires, and verbalizations diversified, reflecting the different educational backgrounds in movement of the teachers and the students and their growing didactic capabilities (Morel 2011, 203). Intense animosities between dancers of different styles developed (Merritt 2012, 54, Carozzi 2015, 114–115, Bolasell 2011, 169) and have continued to be reiterated by dancers and dance teachers until today. The topics addressed were use of space (far-reaching versus contained movements; Carozzi 2015, 115), musicality (different styles claiming their style to be the most

musical; Bolasell 2011, 171), and appropriateness of movements, dress, and behavior for the occasion (conservative versus relaxed; Liska 2017, 8). Another aspect which became even more important in the early twenty-first century was the possibility or absence of flexibility in gender role (Liska 2017, 16–17, 47–56).

Tango practice outside Argentina had equally gained momentum; the 1990s intensified the strong interconnection between tango practices in Buenos Aires and other places all over the globe, particularly in North America, South America, East Asia, and Europe. Travel in both directions supported this intensification. When tourism in Argentina started to grow in the 1990s, it was strongly connected to tango and its practice in Buenos Aires. Apart from tourists watching "for export" shows that were choreographed and designed to cater to the tastes of an international, non-dancing crowd looking for tango exoticism (Cara 2009, 441), the number of people traveling to Buenos Aires to learn the dance and experience it in its "birthplace" increased (Stepputat 2017). Tango tourists mingled with local tango dancers at *milongas*, a phenomenon perceived with mixed feelings by dancers in Buenos Aires, as Liska states, "In tango spaces . . . the foreigners affected practices and experiences in ways that evoked as much resistance and rejection as acceptance and benefits" (Liska 2017, 90). Yet the incoming stream of tango tourists was a welcome economic support for the tango community and its infrastructure, ranging from schools and private teachers specializing in teaching international dance students to tango hotels and tour organizers and to male taxi dancers offering their services to women arriving without a dance partner (Liska 2017, 91). In the other direction, Argentinian dancers attempted to spend part of the year outside Argentina, teaching tango dancing and making a living from their art, which was made possible because of the low value of the Argentinian peso (Liska 2017, 92). Teachers from Argentina brought with them the range of styles and methods orienting their teaching toward movement principles in translocal practice just as they had been doing in Argentina, thus reversing the focus on step sequences. In Europe, the system of intense weekend or weeklong "maestro" workshops by teachers from Argentina became an established part of translocal tango practice. In terms of style, the *salón* style continued to be taught and practiced, but toward the end of the 1990s, *neotango* quickly conquered the European market.

Tango dancing resurfaced in the 1980s and started to prosper in the 1990s. Tango music practice followed suit in the 1990s. In Buenos Aires, young musicians educated in other styles started to venture into tango.[52] Although the individual approaches and musical focal points differed widely, enough musicians were interconnected to make it a movement and give it a name. Luker sums up this renovation as: "the collective work of a growing milieu of contemporary Argentine tango artists, audiences,

and critics has amounted to what has locally been called a 'renovación' ('renovation' or 'renewal') of tango" (Luker 2007, 69). Just as dancers had done, musicians benefited from the national policy to protect, support, and further *tango argentino*. Newly founded institutions gave musicians the opportunity to receive a systematic education as well as provide performance options, for instance, the *Festival de Tango de Buenos Aires*,[53] which first took place in 1998 (Juárez 2014, 167).[54]

Many young musicians followed similar paths in the development of their own tango music; regardless of ensemble size and instrumentation, they progressed into tango by "first transcribing and learning the styles, then making original arrangements of the traditional repertoire and finally composing their own themes, contributing new styles for tango" (Juárez 2014, 168–169).[55] Popular ensembles in the 1990s used the form of the *orquesta típica*, for instance, El Arranque and Orquesta Típica Fernández Fierro (Juárez 2014, 168), as well as smaller ensembles including guitars. The ensembles all had to confront the style that Astor Piazzolla had developed and inevitably negotiate on whether to follow or reject it. Many musicians had encountered tango through Piazzolla and only later started to delve into tango music material from the *época de oro* (Peralta 2014, 191). They found that Osvaldo Pugliese's work proved to be a highly relevant reference to work with for determining their own style (Luker 2007, 74). The Máquina Tanguera collective, for instance, continued to build their explorations mainly upon the work and style of Pugliese (Juárez 2014, 170–171, Krüger 2012, 229–232). Julian Peralta recounts his epiphany of wanting to found an *orquesta típica* when he first listened to a Troilo recording (Peralta 2014, 191).[56] In general, Luker asserts, the tango renovation "consists of drawing upon genre conventions, stylistic details, and musical repertoires from previous periods of tango history and incorporating that material into current practices" (Luker 2007, 69).

While tango dance had swept through the world and became a translocal practice starting in the 1980s, tango music practice remained more localized in Argentina. Tango groups started to tour and receive invitations from tango event organizers outside of Argentina. Their concerts and CD sales reached an international audience in the "world music" niche. Expatriate tango musicians in Europe also gained a larger audience. Gustavo Beytelman, for instance, in exile in France since 1976, became the most prominent and influential tango pianist in Europe, having previously played with Piazzolla, then later founded a tango trio with bandoneonist Juan José Mosalini and bass player Patrice Caratini.

Because of their separate revivals, tango music and dance were not linked as closely in practice as they had been in the 1950s. Prominent musicians of the older generation who were still active—for instance, Horacio Salgán and Leopoldo Federico—had performed with dance orchestras

during the golden age. After the 1950s, they successfully developed their tango styles for tango concert music, continuing to play for an appreciative listening audience. Young tango formations in the 1990s learned from the old masters when they could and were profoundly influenced by *vanguard* music, even if they started rejecting those influences. The initial audience they played for was also at concerts (e.g., Juárez 2014, 174). Despite their interest in pre-1950s tango and revival of the *orquesta típica* sound, they lacked the experience of the *época de oro* orchestras that used to play for dancers—and it was simply not their focus to play for a dancing audience in a *milonga* context. All written sources and personal encounters together paint a picture of a lively music scene that was vividly and creatively exploring the tango music material and rediscovering it for the sake of understanding and performing the music itself, not as music with the additional function to dance to.

Dancers, on the other hand, had learned to dance mainly to recorded music. In Buenos Aires, tango DJing had become established by the mid-1960s. In Europe, most dancers still danced to tango CDs that were played in a loop or were exchanged for another CD when they reached the end, up until the 2000s. Part of the long development of professional tango DJing from Buenos Aires into translocal practice was the advent of the musical structuring of an evening into *tandas* (series) and *cortinas* (curtains) (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 157). This structure, which is common now at almost every *milonga* worldwide, is based on the concept that music of the same orchestra and recordings of the same year go together well for dancing. A *tanda* consists of four tracks from the same orchestra. *Valses* and *milongas* are played as separate *tandas* but comprise mostly only three pieces. A *cortina*—usually a piece of upbeat music outside of tango repertoire—is played in between *tandas* to mark the end of a set of tangos and to give dancers time to sit down, rest, and choose new dance partners. Dancers got used to this musical structure for a *milonga* evening and the wide variety of orchestra recordings that were chosen by the DJ and played to cover a range of dancers' tastes in *época de oro* tango music. Dancers did not miss having music played live, as they were content with the DJ choosing danceable tracks for them. On the contrary, live music could not provide the variety of styles and quality of dance tracks expected by the dancing audience.

One interesting perspective on this topic is offered by Apprill, who writes about tango music and dance development in Paris in the 1980s and 1990s, which seems representative for central Europe of the time. He analyzed the encounter and misunderstandings between tango dancers and musicians in the 1990s. While dancers were not used to dancing to live music and lacked experience in dancing to and physically interpreting unknown music, tango musicians were equally unacquainted with tango

dancers' needs. In fact, French tango musician Olivier Manoury of the tango ensemble Tempo di Tango (cited in Apprill 1999, 79) reveals that musicians felt that playing tango dance music limited their musical expression because the music had to be "rather stable" for dancers used to dancing fixed step sequences. Manoury reflects on how the gap between tango music—no longer "danceable" since the 1960s—and tango dance is too codified:

> The musicians have taken great freedom of rhythm and form and produce music intended only for listening. At the same time, the dance has developed into a direction that makes it difficult to relate to the music: For their part, the dancers have complicated their steps and codified their figures, for which they needed a stable and fixed tempo, which causes the music to be not interesting any more.
>
> (Manoury in Apprill 1999, 79)

It is important to note that at the time Apprill wrote his article, the move away from sequences and toward movement principles in tango dancing had just begun in translocal practice. In the late 1990s, Manoury became one of the pioneers of the movement toward playing for dancers outside Argentina (Apprill 1999, 79). Up until then, tango music and dance had each prospered on their own in multiple ways and diversified into a wide variety of styles. A reconnection between some of these styles in both art forms started in the twenty-first century, roughly a century after the emergence of the genre.

Early Twenty-First Century: Back to the Roots, Reuniting Music and Dance

The construction of a divide between the 1990s and 2000s would be artificial, because all trends that started in the 1990s continued in the next decade, and some that started in the 1990s only gained momentum and became visible to a larger audience in the 2000s. Yet at the turn of the twenty-first century, a major political event in Argentina had a lasting impact: *la crisis* (the crisis). Initiated by the end of the fixed exchange rate between the Argentinian peso and the US dollar, and supported by neoliberal policies, this period of economic depression in Argentina lasted until 2002. About half of all households were below the poverty line. This led to social unrest and riots based on a constant fear of losing one's livelihood. The situation stabilized within a few years, but the effects on Argentinian society were profound. This economic and social crisis did not have a negative impact on the practice of tango, which continued to blossom despite the difficult social and economic circumstances. On the contrary,

practicing tango was a means to find security in cultural identity (Krüger 2012, 68). Playing—and dancing—tango was seen as a resistance "against neoliberalism" (Peralta 2014, 189). One additional, financial reason was that despite economic difficulties, tourism stayed strong due to the low exchange rate; hence, performing for and teaching tourists proved a welcome source of income (Marchini 2007, 36–37).

After the crisis was overcome, the upward trend in tango dance and music continued both in Argentina and translocally. Many more tango ensembles as well as academies were founded to teach music students tango principles, for instance, the Escuela Orlando Goñi, Orquesta Escuela de Tango Emilio Balcarce, and the Escuela de Música Popular Avallaneda in Buenos Aires,[57] or in Europe, the BA and MA programs in *tango argentino* at the Codarts University of the Arts in Rotterdam. Tango musicians gained not only a broader audience but also more respect as representatives of a serious art form. Peralta recalls that:

> In 2001 El Arranque made a tour that included a presentation at the Lincoln Center with Wynton Marsalis, a concert that constitutes one of the first prestigious moments of our generation within tango. From here on, the activity of young *tangueros* begins to be taken into account in a more serious way.
>
> (Peralta 2014, 196).[58]

The last 20 years have seen the advent of tango ensembles in Buenos Aires and abroad, ranging from *dúos*, *quartetos*, and *sextetos* to full *orquestas típicas*. The ensembles focus on many different tango styles and audiences, playing locally as well as internationally, composing new tangos, reviving tango classics, continuing from Piazzolla, breaking with *tango nuevo*, and so forth.

The 2000s also saw a completely new tango genre emerge, the *electrotango* or *tango electrónico*.[59] *Electrotango* is based on sampling techniques (Greco and Lopez Cano 2014) and combines electronic dance music (EDM), or ambient music foundations, with the acoustic characteristics of tango (Liska 2017, 70). The most prominent of these acoustic features is the bandoneon, but also typical rhythmic elements like *marcato in dos* and *arrastre*[60] and melodic samples of well-known tango compositions or voice samples from popular left-wing politicians.[61] It quickly became fashionable to play *electrotango* for tango dancing in Buenos Aires and in Europe, first in Paris, where one member of the Gotan Project was located at that time (Liska 2017, 72, 81). Dancers who focused on *neotango* dancing especially found connecting to *electrotango* easier than dancing to music of the *época de oro* because the movement repertoire of *neotango* fits better to the beat-focused music and the sound aesthetics are much closer to their previous

music acculturation. In the long run, however, *electrotango* did not evolve further and became altogether more popular with an EDM audience than with *milonga* crowds, for which it remained a "minority segment in the tango circuit" (Liska 2017, 82).[62]

Delving into tango movement mechanics and modernizing teaching methods remained important and finally reached such an influence that this can now be considered mainstream (see Liska 2017, 13). The new freedom in movement exploration led to an emancipation of tango dancing as a movement art in its own right. Mariano Frumboli is a prominent figure in this. In his performances, he presents tango as a movement repertoire that can be used and adapted to a broad range of music—or no music at all.[63] For instance, in his dance interpretation of "Clair de Lune" by Claude Debussy,[64] he and his partner, Juana Sepúlveda, go far beyond a relation in terms of 4/4 time and shape their movements in close coordination with the "free meter" of the recording. Another recent performance by a tango dance group led and choreographed by Frumboli to music he composed himself (he has a background in drumming) at the CITA dance festival in Buenos Aires in 2019[65] uses contemporary dance choreographies based on tango movement repertoire. Dana Frigoli, founder of the DNI tango school[66] in Buenos Aires, is another important dancer and choreographer of contemporary dance productions based on tango.

A new connection between tango dancing and music is related to this exploration of tango as a contemporary movement art. In the 2000s, social tango dancers started to experiment with dancing to music that is not classified as "tango". Terms used for such music are either "non-tango" or "alternative", and tracks can be from a wide variety of genres that are impossible to list or even define—though all originate from within the Euro-American popular music canon. They range from Pachelbel's "Canon in D" to the *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001) soundtrack by Yann Thiersen, heavy metal ballads like "Nothing Else Matters" by Metallica, singer-songwriter hits like "Crosses" from José Gonzalez, "In the Death Car" by Goran Bregovic featuring Iggy Pop, to a wide variety of local-language pop hits. If the music has the right speed and the right meter,[67] a stable tempo, often minor harmonies (more major harmonies in *vals* and *milonga*), and interesting melodic and rhythmic features, music can be deemed tango-danceable. Tango DJs started incorporating non-tangos for tango dancing into their evening repertoires, mixing them in *tandas* between *tandas* of classic tangos and *electrotango*. Prominent tango dance teachers spread the concept of dancing to this music. For example, Homer and Cristina Ladas regularly performed to alternative music at tango festivals.[68] Tango as a movement form that can be danced to a wide variety of music genres is one of many directions this art form has taken in the twenty-first century.

At the other end of the spectrum of tango movement and music exploration is the development of the *milonguero* style. Termed a "revival" of *época de oro* dancing, it is actually not a revival but a conceptualization and codification (Carozzi 2015, 160) of a minimalistic tango movement repertoire and its relation to tango music from the *época de oro* or played in *época de oro* style.[69] Susana Miller, who coined the term (Carozzi 2015, 159) while working with dancers Ana Schapira and Cacho Dante, was a proponent of forging *estilo milonguero* into a dance style. *Milonguero* dancing is the declared opposite of *neotango*: stable close embrace, small and compact movements, steady progress on the dance floor. Just as *neotango* dancing developed in the 1980s and reached a peak of its major influence in the following 10 to 20 years (1990s and early 2000s), *milonguero* started in the 1990s and became a vogue translocally between 2000 and 2010. Nevertheless, both styles share the concept of joint improvisation based on basic movement principles. Dancers in both styles put an emphasis on musical interpretation by flexibly combining steps as opposed to dancing set step sequences.

Cara researched the phenomenon of *tanguedad*— "tango ethos" or "the essence of tango" —in Buenos Aires from 2004 to 2007 (Cara 2009, 438). Her focus is on the agency of tango dancers from Buenos Aires in utilizing tango "at home" and tango "for export" for their purposes, and she also shows how these two categories overlap and intersect. She adds that tango "at home"—that is, tango danced in *milongas* as a social practice—is not just danced in Buenos Aires and by Argentinian dancers (Cara 2009, 440). In fact, what she identifies as *tanguedad* is that which tango dancers from inside and outside Argentina seek when dancing tango in a *milonga* surrounding and which at that point is defined as having a strong connection to the partner, listening to the music, and being able to dance with small, controlled steps so as not to invade the dance space of the other couples on a crowded dance floor (Cara 2009, 453–455). *Tanguedad*, by this definition, is linked strongly to the *estilo milonguero* ethos. Dancing with *tanguedad*—which might be termed "authenticity" in tango with all the blurriness that the term entails (see Petridou 2015, 62–63)—is what many translocal practitioners sought during the 2000 and 2010s; this occurred in parallel with the rediscovery and access to golden age music. As a reaction to demand and supply, historical recordings of *época de oro* orchestras were reissued in CD collections, and at the same time, those recordings were made available to the interested audience by several private digitization projects (a few of which were nonprofit) that were aiming to secure the historical recordings. These projects include *tangotunes*, an Austrian digitization project started in 2013, and *tango time travel* from Belgium, which began in 2020. There are also two commercial enterprises: the *Reliquias* series by EMI/DBN in Argentina, which has digitized and reissued

recordings since 2002, and the *Club Tango Argentino* (CTA), a private label based in Tokyo. Tango DJs all over the globe were a particularly grateful clientele who stocked up on tracks ranging from the orchestras of Rodolfo Biagi to Ricardo Tanturi and are now able to serve a dancing crowd a broad variety of danceable *época de oro* tracks for the duration of a four to six hours *milonga*.

In dancing, the move away from repeating sequences to a deeper understanding of movement repertoire not only expanded improvisational options but also opened up more opportunities to interpret the music in an embodied way. Tango dance teachers have offered a wide variety of "tango musicality" classes and workshops in the recent decade for dancers willing to explore tango music–dance relations (see Stepputat 2020). The focus in such classes, more often than not, has been on dancing in *salón* or *milonguero* style to *época de oro* music. The interest in tango music in general and the goal of understanding it on a theoretical level have increased significantly.

A parallel development also starting in the 2000s and becoming more widespread in the recent decade is the rediscovery of the art of playing for dancers by tango musicians. Groups inside and outside Argentina dedicate their time to forging a repertoire that caters to the needs of dancers.[70] One very prominent example is the Sexteto Milonguero, an ensemble that tellingly named their first CD from 2007 *Pa' que bailen* (For Dancing) (Bolasell 2011, 67–68). They performed music for dancers—mainly compositions from the golden age played in slightly new arrangements—and were very popular at *milongas* and festivals in Europe in particular. Another example is the Orquesta Típica La Juan D'Arienzo (founded in 2012) that plays all pieces in the style of Juan D'Arienzo, the influential *orquesta* leader of the golden age. They regularly perform at *milongas* and festivals in Europe, Argentina, and East and Southeast Asia. In 2001, Julián Peralta founded Astillero, an ensemble that has played mainly newly composed pieces since 2005—though the danceability of this group is debated (Peralta 2014, 198, Juárez 2014, 176). The members of Astillero have actively advanced connections between musicians and dancers by organizing milongas with live music, where they either play themselves or invite other tango ensembles, their goal being to "systematically reconnect . . . live performance with the dance-oriented sociability of the milongas" (Luker 2016, 83).

Another example is Orquesta Típica Andariega, founded in 2009, who call their repertoire *bien milonguero*, which they define as "intimately connected to the milonga and good for dancing".[71] Andariega tours Europe, regularly plays in Buenos Aires, and continues to produce CDs with tracks to be played at *milongas*. Luigi Coviello, the bass player of the group, composes new tangos for dancing which are very popular among tango dancers.[72]

Yet even though musicians are able to play for a dancing audience and this dancing audience has the movement capacities and general interest to physically interpret tango music, *milongas* with live music are rare, and there is only a handful of DJs who incorporate recordings of contemporary tango ensembles into a *milonga*.

Most dancers interested in danceable tango music often ignore or actively avoid music recorded by current orchestras, even if these ensembles could theoretically fulfill all the criteria necessary for danceable tango music. Carozzi proposes an explanation for this through the "sacralization" of *época de oro* music that has taken place since the 1980s. She asserts that in the 1980s and 1990s, dancers who learned to dance in the *época de oro* had the opinion that the only danceable music was that of the old times (2015, 107). This is certainly related to the nostalgic longing to revive the *época de oro* and the fact that in the 1980s and 1990s, there were no tango ensembles able to play for dancers the way *orquesta típicas* of the golden age had played. Tango DJs supported this notion by continuously playing the golden age canon of recordings, even though the number of recordings by new orchestras that played for dancing had increased by the 2000s. Today, tango DJs have access to a large number of historical recordings, and the system of playing mainly the canon of these recordings is perpetuated by the requests of the dancers and the acquired skill of the DJs. Two contrasting opinions circulate among tango dancers and also DJs. One group argues that there is no need for additional new tango music because the existing recorded repertoire is so vast. Others believe that if new tango music is being made and played for dancing, there is no actual reason to ignore and exclude it—even if the recordings are fewer and thereby offer limited choices for selection.

Whether or not new tango music recordings should be included at *milongas* was one of the most prominent discussions in early twenty-first-century tango practice, along with the issue of what constitutes true, real, authentic tango dancing and tango music. Debates on what tango is and what it is not have occurred as long as the tango has existed, and every significant innovation that has later become mainstream—or a separate practice—has, at some point, been confronted with the question "¿sigue siendo tango?" ("Is this still tango?") (Bolasell 2011, 52; see also Peralta 2014, 201). Opinions have always been diverse, controversial, and sometimes affected by economic competition.

The State of Translocal Tango in the Early 2020s

Apart from the recent trend of reuniting tango music and tango dancing, there are also tango ensembles that play experimental and/or progressive tango music for concerts. Likewise, there are tango dancers who prefer

to dance to a wide range of music and not "only tango", as well as those who avoid new tango music and focus on *época de oro* recordings. All these practices, even if debated, make up "tango" in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

There is not only one contemporary tango music and dance practice; instead, a broad range of diverse styles in both music and dance coexist mostly peacefully but sometimes contentiously in heated discussions about "authenticity" and simply the "correct" way to dance or to play. The broad distinctions in dance (*tango de salón*, *milonguero*, *neotango*) and in music (for dancing, for concert) still apply and form two continua. Tango musicians and dancers discuss and position themselves in their own realms, which, on a metalevel, is a good sign—a sign that tango practice is alive, still developing, and its members are actively engaging in it.

Tango is a constant in dance and music amid translocal practices. While the generation of tango dancers in Europe who started to learn in the 1980s and 1990s is aging, new generations of dancers have taken up the practice. Local tango dance communities dwindle and grow, separate and vanish, or reorient themselves by inviting new teachers. International tango events, including festivals with live music, guest teachers, *milongas*, and performances, attract large numbers of tango dancers and serve as an important hub for trends in social tango dance practice as well as an income opportunity for tango dance teachers, musicians, and DJs. Tango ensembles from a variety of musical and geographic backgrounds play translocally in concerts and in *milongas*, and community orchestras and professional groups have a market and audience. Some dancers become more interested in newly composed tango music, while others tend to focus exclusively on the *época de oro*. Some DJs play *electrotango* and non-tango/alternative music; others despise this tradition. Like tango practice in Buenos Aires, the translocal tango network is comprised of enough people to nurture separate practices without losing any of them: local *prácticas*, *neolongas*,[73] queer tango events, *encuentros*, marathons, and festivals all have their audience. Dancing is done in *salón* styles, *milonguero*, *neotango*, and any combination and fusion of these. Dancing to live music, never dancing to live music, preferring alternative music, rediscovering music of the 1920s, focusing on music of the 1930s to 1950s—all this is happening at the same time. The possible trajectories for tango musicians include venturing into progressive and experimental tango music, playing for dancers and for listening audiences, and rediscovering historical practices.

In other words, neither tango music nor tango dance follows a clearly recognizable trend in one direction or another. The market seems to be in a stable balance of supply and demand and was growing slightly until 2020, when the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 brought tango practice to a standstill. Both musicians and dancers became creative as they tried

to continue practicing their passion, generating income, and connecting in virtual and restricted ways. Some locations had to stop operating, and some tango professionals oriented themselves toward other career paths. However, as rules to overcome the pandemic and, with that, bans to gather in public places were lifted globally, all kinds of tango events reappeared with new energy. New enterprises and people started their businesses and activities in the post-pandemic thrill of doing tango again, adding to those still in business. We see now that the pandemic could only momentarily halt translocal tango practice and overall did not have a long-lasting impact. At the time of writing, tango dance and music communities continue thriving, and *tango argentino* practice is very much alive in local and translocal settings.

Notes

1 See also Denniston's table that displays an overview of the development of tango music, dance, and song during the course of the twentieth century, which shows the focus on either tango music for social dance or tango as concert music during each time period (Denniston 2007, 41).
2 Several authors have traced the early development of the tango prior to 1900, notably Selles (1977), Chasteen (2000, 2004), and Torp (2007).
3 For an overview of European immigration to Argentina, see Adelman (1995); for Argentinian immigration policy at the turn of the century, see Solberg (1969). Goebel (2016) covers the change in population composition in Latin American countries.
4 See an extensive biography written by Alberto Rasore on *Todo Tango* (www.todotango.com/english/artists/biography/105/Jose-Ricardo/).
5 On issues of race in historical context in Argentina, see, for instance, Alberto and Elena (2016).
6 See also the 2013 documentary film *The African Roots of tango* by Dom Pedro.
7 Since people came from different regions of Italy that were culturally distinct, it is a generalization to speak of "the Italian" culture. In addition, some of the important Italian names in tango—especially those from the 1920s onward—were first-generation Argentinians born to Italian parents.
8 Tango lyrics is one factor of Italian influence, in addition to those mentioned earlier, that has been studied in detail. Italian cultural and linguistic influences are obvious both in content—with references to Italian culture, places, names, and tunes—as well as in the language itself, for instance, by use of terms from the argots *cocoliche* and *lunfardo* (see Conde 2014). Both argots include a significant number of terms from Italian dialects. See, for instance, Serra (2013, 5–13), Ostuni (2005, 57–63), Azzi (1996, 443–447).
9 For the connection between nation building and the *criollo* movement, including the struggle and controversy concerning which music would properly represent "Argentinianness" (i.e., tango or rural folk) and post-factum declarations of what is considered to be *criollo*, see Bockelmann (2011) as well as Torp (2007, 316–340).
10 Another factor in the multicultural mix underlying the early development of tango are the *klezmorim*, players of Jewish music who also were among the

early tango musicians. This aspect has not been well researched, the only publications so far being Judkovski (1998) and Nudler (1998).

11 For an overview of the history and organology as well as playing technique of the bandoneon (*bandoneón*), see Krapovickas (2012) and Mauriño (2009).

12 Karush (2012a, 52) describes how the Columbia record company was responsible for creating the name *orquesta típica criolla* in 1911 to give tango music a traditional, Argentinian connotation.

13 See the informative website of the Argentinian Barrel Organ Museum in Buenos Aires: https://web.archive.org/web/20160313225635/http://organito.com.ar/index_es.htm.

14 See also Pesce's chapter on *organitos* and shellac disks as media for spreading tango (2011, 315–337).

15 The list is also accessible on *Todo Tango* (www.todotango.com/english/history/chronicle/345/The-publishing-houses-of-tango-sheet-music-First-part/).

16 Varela has published a collection of tango sheet music front covers, sorted by topic (2010).

17 Connell and Gibson write about the importance of recorded music for the dissemination of it, and the pathway to the commodification of music caused by the establishment of the recording industries in the early twentieth century (Connell and Gibson 2003, 52).

18 See Karush's study (2012a) of the influence of mass media on Argentine music traditions and its society in terms of national politics and consumerism, in particular the second chapter concerning the tango.

19 Sources state that there was an average of five men to each woman among the poorer classes of society (Baim 2007, 20).

20 For a brief overview of anti-dance sentiments in North America from the fourth century to the late twentieth century, see Knowles (2009, 3–14).

21 See a comparison of *corte* step descriptions in different tango dance manuals dating between 1911 and 1916 compiled by Melissa and Nick Enge and published online in the *Library of Dance* (www.libraryofdance.org/dances/early-tango/).

22 *Según lo que podemos reconstruir e interpretar, el procedimiento consistía en la inflexión abrupta e inesperada de la regularidad rítmica en el transcurso de una frase, por medio de la prolongación de un sonido o trémolo ejecutado por la flauta o el violín. Dicha pausa tenía una funcionalidad específica para la danza que era habilitar el momento lúdico y erótico del baile. En este marco producido desde la música, se realizaban los famosos "cortes" y "quebradas" del cuerpo, es decir, los movimientos que fueron prohibidos y luego eliminados de la coreografía. Los cortes musicales habrían sido eliminados justamente con la intención de evitar los provocativos movimientos en el baile.*

23 An overview of important figures and dance teachers of the time is found in Benzecry Sabá (2015, 66–67).

24 Some sources state the year 1912 as the year "tangomania" started, mainly referring to the dance craze (e.g. Denniston 2007, 66). Other sources refer to the year 1910 as the first presentation of tango in Paris. See Munarriz for a discussion on the early years of tango dance and music in Paris (2015, 60–63).

25 Research on the further spread of tango in European countries has been conducted by several authors: Klothman traces the development of tango dance in German cities (2008), and Eder looks at the development of this dance in Austria, in particular in Vienna (2017). The situation of tango dance in France is described mainly by Jacotot (2013) and Mandressi (2017), while Munarriz (2015) charts the musical development of tango in France.

26 The tango also spread to other American countries directly; see, for instance, Bermúdez (2014) on tango in Colombia. To my knowledge, any history of tango music and dance in the African continent is not covered in any academic literature. Recordings of local tango from the 1920s have been made in Northern African countries, including Algeria, Lebanon, and Egypt (see, for instance, examples on the compilation of local tangos "Echoes from Afar" (2001) by Oriente Music).
27 This description of the development of *tango argentino* outside Argentina in the twentieth century is incomplete. I explicitly focus on Europe, East Asia, and North America. These areas have been the largest markets for tango music and dance outside Argentina (see also Denniston 2007, 94). Little research has been done on tango adaptations in other regions of the world; one example that looks at popular music, including the tango, in Southeast Asia in the first half of the twentieth century is Barendregt et al. (2017).
28 See additional information about the manual plus a digital version at *Social dance at Stanford* (https://socialdance.stanford.edu/Syllabi/El_Tango_Argentino.htm). A thorough reconstruction of Lima's dance descriptions and much more material about historical tango dancing between 1910 and 1920 can be found in the *Library of Dance* (www.libraryofdance.org/dances/early-tango/).
29 *La burguesía porteña lo aceptara como un gesto condescendiente con quienes lo habían creado*.
30 See also Azzi (1996, 438).
31 Garcia Brunelli sees this period of creative experimentation as being under the influence of the economic situation. The year 1930 saw a sharp drop in the value of the Argentinian peso and an economic crisis in the wake of the Great Depression that had started in 1929. By 1935, the situation had stabilized again so that tango music and dance were flourishing more strongly than before.
32 Many authors have published elaborate studies on the main orchestra leaders of the *época de oro* and their orchestral musical styles, for instance, Martin (2014), Link and Wendland (2016), Krüger (2012), Lavocah (2014), and volumes 4 *Época de Oro* (Sierra 1970), 15 *Di Sarli* (Sierra 1980), and 16 *Aníbal Troilo* (Eichelbaum 1980) of the "La Historia del Tango" series.
33 See a comprehensive overview of the use of tango in popular "global" cinema from the beginnings of film up to the 1990s by Ochoa (2003).
34 See Karush (2012a, 71–84) for an exploration of the political and economic background that focuses on Argentine culture and "authenticity" in the cinema productions of the 1930s.
35 The film is available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=7s5W1Cxen2g.
36 The decades following the *época de oro* until the 1990s are called the *vanguard* period according to Luker (2016, 70).
37 See also Carozzi for regularly repeated anecdotes by *milongueros* of the golden age that relate to the decline of tango music for dancing and tango dancing itself. For example, there is the story that while Piazzolla was the arranger for Troilo's orchestra, Troilo said to him, "Don't give me so many notes, the dancers are going to complain", to which Piazzolla responded, "I am going to make them sit down to listen" (*No me pongas tantas notas, que los bailarines se van a quejar—Yo voy a hacer que se sienten para escuchar*) (Carozzi 2015, 210).
38 See Stepputat and Djebbari (2020) for a general introduction to factors that influence the separation of music and dance practices in translocal music–dance genres, and Stepputat (2020) for the investigation of *tango argentino* music–dance separation and reconnecting strategies.

39 Television was introduced to Argentina in 1951 (Karush 2012, 219).
40 See also Benzecry Sabá (2015, 162–166) for more information on shows and films produced in the 1960s and 1970s and the dancers appearing in them.
41 Many tango musicians went into exile, in particular to France (Cara 2009, 444).
42 See also Reichardt's 1982 text about methods of repression (mainly media-related and political) and his passionate call for justice and accountability of the "prohibitors and murderers" of Argentinians and their cultural expression, the tango.
43 See Lavocah's (2016) biography of Pugliese.
44 See also the impressively thorough and well-researched *Wikipedia* article on the show initially written by user Mfrerich in 2018. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tango_Argentino_(musical)).
45 Many tango musicians and dancers had gone into exile in Europe in the 1970s. Some started teaching the dance, and musicians continued to play and perform. *Tango argentino* was present before the 1980s, an important fact that should not be overlooked as it certainly lay the foundation for the "instant" success after 1983 (see, for instance, Apprill 1999, Plisson 2002, 129–131, Lange 2014, Sartori 2014).
46 See Stepputat (2017) for an exploration of the "tango pilgrimage" phenomenon of tango dancers traveling to Buenos Aires.
47 See also Morel (2012, 86), who explores the narrative behind the general statement that *Tango Argentino* is the reason for the tango revival in Buenos Aires and investigates alternative narratives.
48 In 1985, Rodolfo Dinzel became a cast member of *Tango Argentino* (Gazenbeek 2013).
49 See Carozzi (2015, 139) for an exploration of the commodification of tango between 1983 and the 2000s, particularly concerning the relation between new teaching systems and the labelling of tango with different styles.
50 *Lo primero que aparece es la danza, luego la música. La música del tango requiere un conocimiento profundo para sostenerse y necesitaba más tiempo de estudio para volver*.
51 Also see the section on dance styles *neotango* and *tango de salón* in the "Dance" chapter.
52 Peralta gives a vivid personal account of how he came to play *tango argentino*, including which musicians of the older generation influenced him, how he progressed and was supported, and which obstacles he and his tango musician companions faced. He also refers to how the interest in tango of that generation was political, an act of resistance to neoliberalism (2014, 189; see also Juárez 2014, Liska 2017, 1).
53 The festival is noteworthy in many respects; it is an important place for musicians to perform to gain prestige and recognition, and it is a significant player in international tango tourism, in particular since the advent of the world championships (*Campeonato Mundial de Baile de Tango*) in 2003. The tango festival is dedicated to all aspects of tango practice.
54 See also Luker (2016) for the state of tango music in relation to cultural policies and economic circumstances in Argentina since the early twenty-first century.
55 *Primero transcribiendo y aprendiendo los estilos, luego realizando arreglos originales sobre el repertorio tradicional y finalmente componiendo sus propios temas, con el aporte de nuevos estilos para el tango*.
56 See Link and Wendland (2016, 287–330, also 79–83) for other musicians of the 1990s and their musical oeuvre in tango.

57 This academy was already founded in 1986 but grew in importance in the 2000s.
58 *En 2001 El Arranque realiza una gira que incluye su presentación en el Lincoln Center con Wynton Marsalis, concierto que constituye uno de los primeros momentos prestigiosos de nuestra generación dentro del tango. A partir de aquí la actividad de los jóvenes tangueros comienza a ser tenida en cuenta de manera más seria.*
59 For a short introduction to the *electrotango* formations of the 2000s, including Gotan Project, Narcotango, Bajofondo, Tanghetto, and Otros Aires, see Bolasell (2011, 51–58).
60 An emphasis on a beat by a crescendo toward the beat, with an abrupt ending; see the explanation in the "Music" chapter.
61 See Greco and Lopez Cano (2014) as well as Liska (2017, 72–76) for an exploration of the political dimensions of *electrotango*.
62 See also Liska on the relation between the emerging queer tango movement and *electrotango* (2017, 76–87).
63 An iconic dance scene from the film *Tango Libre* (2012, Frédéric Fonteyne) is situated in a prison, with male dancers dancing first to no music, then later the stomping and beating of the fellow prisoners in a 3–3–2 rhythm. Mariano Frumboli takes the lead in this dance scene.
64 See the performance at the Mediterranean Summer Tango Festival 2017 in Poreč, Croatia (https://youtu.be/vbHwI1hg9xQ).
65 See the performance recorded at the CITA 2019 Closing Night, published on Fabian Salas's YouTube channel. Dancers: Chicho Frumboli, Moira Castellano, Rodrigo Fonti, Carolina Giannini, Diego Valero, Delfina Pissani. Idea, music, choreography, and artistic direction: Chicho Frumboli (https://youtu.be/kU5UFbkqMms).
66 For many years, the DNI was an important and influential school for tango dancing on an international scale. Hit by the global COVID-19 pandemic, it had to close in 2020.
67 In addition to the tango 4/4, alternative music for tango dancing can be in 2/4 and 3/4 as well, termed "alternative milonga" and "alternative vals", respectively.
68 See, for instance, Homer and Cristina Ladas dance to "Down" by Jason Walker at the 2015 Tucson Tango Festival: https://youtu.be/u7xQujJTINk.
69 See a thorough description of *milonguero*, *salón*, and *neotango* dancing in the respective section in the "Dance" chapter.
70 Since the 1990s in Europe, the development of a danceable music repertoire was started mainly by groups and individual musicians in France and Germany.
71 See their website at www.andariegatango.com.ar/info.
72 The new composition by Luigi Coviello, "No me hables" (2014), received the top ranking for danceability by tango dancers (see section on the online survey).
73 *Neolongas* are *milongas* where only electrotango and alternative tango music is played.

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3 Tango Music and Its Danceability

Tango music has many sub-genres and styles, with different purposes, artistic approaches, and audiences. One of the many possible options for tango music is playing music for social tango dancing, based on the historical practice of tango music and dance in the first half of the twentieth century: the *época de oro* of tango in Argentina. This was the time when tango for dancing reached its peak and the ensemble formation of the *orquesta típica* (four violins, four bandoneons, viola, cello, double bass, and piano) was formed. From there, tango developed in many directions. It progressed into elaborate music for concerts, was fused with a variety of other musical styles, and experienced a revival of the *orquesta típica* tango music in the late twentieth century. In this chapter I focus on the tango dance music of the *época de oro* as performed and recorded by many orchestras from the mid-1930s to 1950s and taken up again by tango musicians since the 1990s.

The *época de oro* had a lasting impact on tango music, dance, and poetry until today. Several authors have published detailed studies of *época de oro* tango music. Two important publications focusing on the features of tango musical are by Horacio Salgán (*Curso de Tango* 2001) and Julián Peralta (*La Orquesta Típica*, 2008; English translation 2015), who are both well-known tango musicians of two different generations; while Horacio Salgán (born 1916) was an important orchestra leader and composer of the late golden age and continued to play well into the twenty-first century (Link and Wendland 2016, 200–219, Varassi Pega 2021, 70–111), Julián Peralta is an influential protagonist in the current *tango argentino* scene in Buenos Aires. Both present basics of the tango in the *época de oro* tradition as played by an *orquesta típica*. The authors wrote these books mainly with the intention to educate musicians about tango and include suggestions and rules for instrumentation and arrangements, thereby also offering insights useful for composing tango. Other authors with a musicological or ethnomusicological background have written about musical features of *orquesta típica* traditions, including Pelinski (2000b), Krüger

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(2012), Martin (2014), Carozzi (2015), Link and Wendland (2016), García Brunelli (2016), and Varassi Pega (2021).

The aim of this chapter is to explore musical features of *época de oro* tango music that are considered important for danceability by tango dancers, DJs, and musicians. To this end, I start with a brief rendering of the important aspects of tango music based on the publications mentioned earlier. I focus on the main musical features: rhythm, melody, and harmony as used in tango compositions and arrangements. Next, I present principles that are important for the performance of tango, which are interpretation and variation, arrangement, and orchestral style. The main part of this chapter is dedicated to danceability aspects of tango music. I first explore the topic of danceability as defined and reflected upon by tango DJs and tango dance teachers, blended with my own experiences. I then present the outcome of two experiments designed to gather more insights into what tango dancers consider to be danceable tango music. The first is an online survey that asked for an assessment of the danceability of a wide range of tango recordings. The second is a danceability experiment carried out with dancers across Europe. Both experiments were designed to pinpoint musical features that are important for dancers to judge a piece as more or less tango-danceable. I present both experiments in their design and outcome and interpret the results. The final section is dedicated to the difficulties contemporary tango musicians are confronted with if they want to play and compose a tango "*bien milonguero*"—good for dancing.

Tango Musical Features

The features of melody, harmony, and rhythm are suitable categories for exploring fundamental musical structures in tango because European music traditions are the main basis of *tango argentino*. Of course, the functions and uses of the three categories overlap, and I present them separately in the following only for the sake of clarity. What I summarize here are general rules in the rhythmical, melodic, and harmonic construction of tango, which also means that exemptions exist, which does not make the general descriptions less valid.

Melody

The melody is the starting point and foundation of a tango music piece: melody "reigns supreme in tango texture" (Link and Wendland 2016, 32). Melodies are composed of relatively short motives which are combined into phrases of mostly eight (also four, or sixteen) bars with a cadence at the end (Peralta 2008, 20). The eight bars are often constructed in an antecedent–consequence relationship (Link and Wendland 2016, 35), which

means that the first half of the phrase presents or opens the theme, while the second half functions like an answer, or a closing of the idea.

The phrases are combined into parts. By default, tangos have two fundamental parts (A and B), consisting of two phrases of eight bars each (Krüger 2012, 78). Further, short melodic parts can be added between the parts and function as introduction, bridge, or coda (Peralta 2008, 23). Peralta calls these *pasajes*, translated in the English version of the book as "complimentary passages" (2008, 97). Such short melodic parts can also be incorporated into a part, their main function being that of an embellishment (Link and Wendland 2016, 101).

Sometimes, two melodies in different instruments or instrument groups overlap. Peralta calls these "secondary melodies" and states they can also be called "countermelodies" (Peralta 2008, 22). Arrangements often make use of countermelodies which have a contrasting character (for example, legato–staccato, long notes–series of short notes, different octaves, etc.) (Peralta 2008, 95). Countermelodies provide harmonic structure but are still seen predominantly as a melodic element of a tango (see Link and Wendland 2016, 100). They can be added into the original composition, or at a later point by the arranger of a piece (see following paragraph on arrangement).

In general, there are two kinds of tango melodies: those that are rhythmic (*rítmicas*), and those considered primarily melodic (*melódicas*) (Salgán 2001, 32), or legato (*ligadas*)[1] (Peralta 2008, 31). The difference is that *rítmica* melodies feature more accents and staccato, while *melódica* lines make use of legato and longer motives. Some aspects of tango interpretation complicate the mix of melodic and rhythmic melodies. Any composed melody can be varied through interpretation. Considering this, it is difficult to characterize a melody in a composition unequivocally because the interpretation can give the melody an entirely different character (see Krüger 2012, 80). In addition, a tango composition can incorporate both characteristics, either in overlapping melodies or separated in different parts (for instance, A rhythmic, B melodic). Therefore, it is not always clear if a tango composition has one quality or another (Salgán 2001, 32). Nevertheless, these two categories are a fundamental classification of melodic material in tango.

Tango melodies are rarely played the way they are notated. Musicians perform them based on a "tango vocabulary" of interpretation, which includes typical embellishments and ways of phrasing. Common embellishments in tango melodies are *appoggiaturas* (added notes played before resolving into the actual note), repetitions of notes (a long note divided into several shorter ones), octave grace notes (short notes played before the actual note one octave higher or lower), *arpeggios* (chords broken up in separate notes, played quickly one after the other in upward order),

trills (fast, alternate playing of two notes close to each other), mordents (trill with just one alternation), and glissandi (slides connecting two notes) (Peralta 2008, 43, Link and Wendland 2016, 33).

For all melodies, but particularly *melódico* parts, the way of phrasing is an important element in turning a notated melody into a tango melody. Giving an example from current tango practice, Peralta writes that "with some exceptions, phrasing is usually not notated. It is instead worked out in rehearsals, where the particularities of phrasing that cannot be completely notated can be more adequately addressed by the group" (Peralta 2015, 33). Such phrasing is called *fraseo* in tango, and it basically adds freedom to the rhythmical interpretation of a melody by adding or eliminating notes and by changing the rhythm slightly by pulling and pushing notes to the front and to the back in a *rubato* fashion. In any case, it is important that the rubato does not change the overall length of the melody; it will just change the rhythmic structure by stretching and condensing rhythmic formulas in relation to the metric foundation.

An important issue is that, despite all the liberties in interpretation, a melody should still be "displayed with clarity"[2] (Salgán 2001, 34). Salgán adds that this is particularly true for the first time the melody is played, because this way "the listener who does not know the piece and who hears it for the first time, has a clear idea of it"[3] (2001, 34). To achieve this, it is important that at the end of a phrase, melody, harmony, and rhythm should meet. This general rule of a clear phrase ending—with neither melody, harmonization, nor rhythmic accompaniment lagging—is a fundamental aspect of the overall structure of a tango piece.

Although melodies are mostly written for the bandoneon and violin or piano (see following section on instrumentation), they can also be part of the bass line. The figuration here is limited because the bass needs to primarily convey the rhythmic structure. That is, melodic lines in the bass need to include the stresses on one and three—with the exception that if the other instrument groups articulate the one and three strongly, the bass has more freedom in these moments (Peralta 2008, 96).

Harmony

In *época de oro* tango, the main function of the harmonies is to underline the melodic progression. Harmonies are not included for the sake of interesting harmonic development but to prettify the melody (see Krüger 2012, 86). The briefness of this section compared to the sections on melody and rhythm shows how much more value is put on those two elements. Harmony follows melodic progression; harmonic complexity is subordinate to rhythmic complexity.

Harmonies used in tango belong to the functional major–minor tonal system. If chromatic harmonies and jazz-influenced extended chords are included—which is increasingly the case since the 1950s—the harmonic structures nevertheless always stay in a functional diatonic framework (Link and Wendland 2016, 34). The harmonies used most often are tonic I, dominant V, and subdominant IV. Often, secondary dominants V/V and V/IV are included in both major and minor modes (Peralta 2008, 122). A characteristic feature is a cadence of V-I or IV-V-I at the end of a part and the overall piece. While the piece ends with the tonic, the emphasis—in dynamic and/or length—is often on the preceding dominant chord to the degree that the final chord is sometimes almost imperceptible. A further chord used regularly is the German augmented sixth, followed by V-I (Peralta 2008, 118). If dissonant harmonies are included, they must always be resolved and be integrated into the functional harmonic progression (Krüger 2012, 87). Unresolved dissonances are outside of the harmonic scope of classic tango.

An element that is tightly bound to the prominent melodic structures is the addition of a second and third voice to the main melody, thereby generating harmonies. This is a common feature in *época de oro* compositions, the general rule being that the additional voices are set in thirds or sixths parallel to the main voice (see Peralta 2008, 47). Contrapuntal melodic lines by the second voice usually lead back to parallel structures, re-establishing the harmony (Peralta 2008, 48). The melodic lines of the voices rarely cross.[4] If three voices are used, Peralta emphasizes that the third voice should take on the additional notes of the underlying harmony (Peralta 2008, 49). This construction of harmonies with several voices underlies the importance of the melody over harmonic structures.

As will be described in more detail in the next section on rhythm and metric structures, tangos are organized in two or more main parts. In most cases, the first part (A) is set in a minor key. The following part (B) relates to the first part using the parallel or the relative major key (see Link and Wendland 2016, 35).

Rhythm

Tango music of the *época de oro* is written in 4/4 meter (four beats per bar), with an average 120 bpm, and only very slight or no perceivable tempo changes within a piece. Strong accentuations signify tango rhythmic structures, most prominently in the accompaniment. What is called *marcato in cuatro* (marked in four) is an accentuation of all four beats in a bar with mostly equal strength. A *marcato in dos* (marked in two) structure accentuates only the first and the third beat in a bar. Though it is generally

said that in tango either one or the other is used, it might be better viewed as a continuum between two extremes of accentuating all four or only two beats in a bar. Several orchestras (for instance, those of Aníbal Troilo, Horacio Salgán, Alfredo Gobbi, or Carlos Di Sarli) use more nuanced accentuation and are almost in the middle of the continuum.[5]

The rhythmic structure needs to be stable to counteract the metrically more flexible melodic *fraseo* (Krüger 2012, 88). Despite this basic rhythmic consistency, a piece gets its tango characteristics from several rhythmical gadgets that deviate from the clear accentuations dictated by *marcato in dos* and *marcato in cuatro*. For instance, the fundamental bass line can use patterns that deviate from the beat accentuations. One such prominent variation is a rhythmical pattern called *bordoneo*. It is composed of three syncopated fundamental, deeper notes and mostly higher filling notes.[6] The deep fundamental notes form a so-called 3–3–2 pattern,[7] notated in two successive dotted quarter notes followed by one simple quarter note, which adds up to four quarters (equaling one bar) (Figure 3.1, bar 1).

One of the most well-known rhythmical patterns that is played with a shift of accents developed out of the *bordoneo* 3–3–2 bass line and can be played by all instrumental groups. It has gained fame as the typical tango rhythm—simply called the 3–3–2 pattern—through the popular works of Astor Piazzolla (most of all the piece *Libertango*), but it is also present in earlier tango repertoire (Link and Wendland 2016, 31). Additional typical accentuations are the 3–3–2 pattern shifted by one eighth to begin on the offbeat (Figure 3.1, bar 2), and two strong accents each one eighth after the strong beat on one and three (Figure 3.1, bar 3).

Tango accompaniment includes several syncopated patterns. In general, a *syncopation* is a shift of accent emphasis away from the strong beats to unexpected moments in the flow of the music. Link and Wendland list three basic options of such a *síncopa* pattern in tango (see Figure 3.2), which are *a tierra*, *anticipada a tierra*, and *anticipada y contratiempo*. The first, most common one, *a tierra*, starts on the downbeat; the *anticipada* aims at the downbeat but starts in the previous bar anticipating the downbeat. The

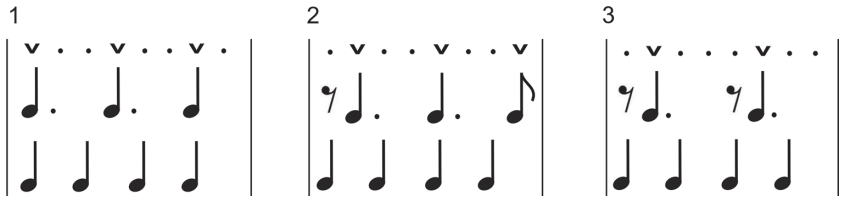

Figure 3.1 Notation of accent shifts in the *marcato in dos*, including the 3–3–2 pattern on the left (also see Peralta 2008, 66). Lower line of four quarter notes included for reference.

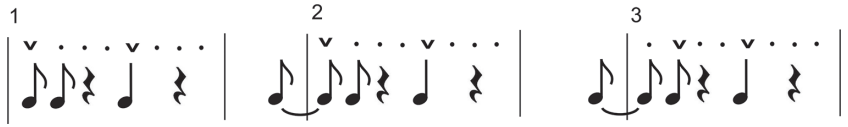

Figure 3.2 Notation of three *síncopa* options: (1) *a tierra*, (2) *anticipada a tierra*, and (3) *anticipada y contratiempo*.

third, *anticipada* with *contratiempo*, starts as the *anticipada* but does not land on the downbeat; instead, it aims for an eighth note after the downbeat. In all three cases, the syncopation formula continues with an eighth anticipating the third, strong beat, on which the syncopation resolves (Link and Wendland 2016, 28–29). It is important to note that tango syncopations have a minimum length of eighth notes, meaning, notes shorter than eighths will not be used in a syncopation (Peralta 2008, 35).

A prominent accentuation that is not a *síncopa* but is played with accentuation in the *marcato in dos* is the *yumba* introduced by Osvaldo Pugliese into the tango repertoire. *Yumba* is an onomatopoetic word indicating the two accented elements "yum" on the first and third and the "ba" on the second and fourth beats of a bar. It is based on a strong *marcato in dos*, with the chord played on the first and third note and the second and fourth note being a rhythmic, atonal filler accent, for instance, played on the piano as the lowest note on the keyboard (or even a cluster), or on the bass played with a percussive effect of the bow (Peralta 2008, 65–66).

Possibly the most important aspect of rhythmical interpretation in tango, though, is *arrastre* (to drag). Peralta defines *arrastre* as "rhythmic anticipation of the attack note" (Peralta 2015, 35). Link and Wendland call it "an anticipatory sliding" (2016, 29) and explain the use of the term as the "impression of yearning and striving as the music 'drags' to the down beat" (2016, 30). The *arrastre* can begin with or without an accent. Those that begin without an accent build up "from nothing" up to the attack of the anticipated note. This can be done either by building up a crescendo on the anticipated note up to the accent or by tying a short, accented note to the note on the first beat of a bar.[8] The *arrastre* can be played by all groups of instruments, and its rhythmic importance is underlined by the definition of *arrastre* as a percussive effect, for instance, by Salgán, who states that the *arrastre* "can be considered almost a percussive effect, since it does not look for a tonal clarity but, on the contrary, a rhythmic effect of imprecise sound"[9] (Salgán 2001, 87). The *arrastre* can be played best on the bandoneon; all other instruments of the tango orchestra imitate the acoustic possibilities that the bandoneon has to "slide" into the anticipated note.[10] Most often, this is done by all string instruments through *portamento* (starting to play the note earlier and tying the note into the strong

beat) or on the piano by playing a fast upward progression of chromatic notes (Krüger 2012, 89).

The *síncopa* and the *arrastre* are often combined into a variety of patterns, differentiated by the placement of the accentuation in the *síncopa* as well as the placement of the *síncopa* in the bar, for instance, on the strong downbeat, or the weak upbeat (see Peralta 2008, 69–71). *Síncopas* can be combined into "double *síncopas*" or "successive *síncopas*" by adding one immediately after the other (Peralta 2008, 77). Another important aspect is that most phrases start with an upbeat note before the downbeat first note of a bar.

Although rhythmic features are fundamentally important in general, tango ensembles do not include percussion instruments. Percussive sounds called *yeites* add flavor to the rhythmical construction of tango by supporting accents and rhythmic formulas, or by being played in between accents to enhance acoustic texture. *Yeites* are sounded by using chordophones (violins and bass) and aerophones (bandoneon) as ideophones, in other words, by percussive striking of the instrument's resonators or strings.[11] A typical *yeite* sound is the *chicharra* (cicada), generated by playing short notes with the bow behind the bridge of the violin (Link and Wendland 2016, 50). Another effect on a violin is *tambor* (drum), which aims to produce a sound imitating a drum stroke. For this, the player produces a dry sound by blocking the strings with the left hand and plucking a string hard with the right hand.[12] Hitting effects called *golpe* are at times carried out on all instruments, for instance, using the back of the bass or the side of the bandoneon keyboard box (Peralta 2008, 190). *Yeites* can be notated in a score, agreed upon in a rehearsal, or added spontaneously by individual musicians during a performance, depending on the rehearsal and performance practice of a tango ensemble.

Performance Practice

Many *época de oro* compositions have been recorded by a variety of *orquestas típicas*. Each of these recordings is clearly recognizable as the same composition, yet the interpretations and arrangements vary significantly. During the *época de oro* and up until now, if an *orquesta* chooses a tango composition for a performance, the aim is not to play a faithful rendition of the original composition. On the contrary, the art of performing tango music lies in the interpretation of a given composition in a way that conveys the unmistakable style of the orchestra playing.[13] Therefore, not only the compositional elements of the rhythm, melody, and harmony signify tango music. Of similar importance are performance principles and practice. Because of this, a third person in addition to the composer and orchestra leader is of utmost importance: the musical arranger. Their task

is to set a composition in the personal style of the orchestra. Just as there are rules and boundaries in the construction of a melody, the use of harmonies as well as the meter and rhythm for composing a tango, the interpretation, variation, and instrumentation in the arrangement of a composition follow basic rules. In the following I will demonstrate some fundamentals for these techniques.

Instrumentation

Tango can be played with almost any instrument and ensemble size. However, since the focus here is on *época de oro* tango music, I will explore the standard instruments of the *orquesta típica*.

The instrument prominently associated with tango is the *bandoneón*.[14] The other instruments are the piano and double bass, violins, and sometimes cello and viola.[15] In the initial tango ensemble called *orquesta típica criolla*, six musicians formed a sextet with two violins, two bandoneons, one piano, and the double bass.[16] Since the 1930s, this ensemble formation has been broadened by doubling the existing sections to four or more violins and bandoneons, to give more volume to the sound and, at the same time, to be able to incorporate more voices.

Within the *orquesta típica*, the instruments have assigned roles in the arrangement of a tango piece. The simple rule is that double bass and piano (mainly left hand) lay the rhythmical and harmonic foundations while bandoneon and string instruments carry the melodic lines, adding harmonies if they are set in more than one voice. In practice, this simple rule is often broken and bent, but never abandoned completely. It is where composers and arrangers start from and from where they embark into creatively organizing the instruments into a tango piece. Of course, the tonal ranges of the instruments as well as their timbres and playing techniques give both the frame and the options for their use in an arrangement.[17]

Some more general rules for the overall instrumentation include bandoneon and violin sections set in unison, giving more sonority to the melodic line they are playing. They can also be arranged into two or more voices, and melodic lines can cross over from one instrumental section to the other. A violin, bandoneon, and the piano can be arranged to play a short solo part, while the other instruments provide a stable rhythmic and harmonic frame. In contrast, all instruments can also be arranged to sometimes play the same (tutti).[18] As has been explained before, harmonic and rhythmic elements should be arranged in a way that supports the prominent melody. This main melody can be played by all the groups of instruments at times, while others take on supporting roles. The way a tango piece uses these options is bound to an orchestras' own style and the skill of the arranger.

The Art of Arranging

The arranger's task is to make a tango composition sound in a way that makes it distinct in the style of an orchestra and differentiates it from versions played by other orchestras. This tradition, which developed in parallel with the establishment of the *orquesta típica*, reached its peak in the 1940s and continues until today (Martin 2014, 91). Martin calls the interrelations between composer, arranger, and performer in tango the "triadic dimension of instrumental creation" (Martin 2014, 94). She adds that, in the 1920s, the composition was most important for the performance, followed by the interpretation of the composition in the 1930s, and the arrangement of compositions in the *época de oro* (Martin 2014, 96–97). According to Pelinski, the first tango ensemble leader to systematize the arrangement for his group—the early *orquesta típica* in sextet size—was Julio de Caro in the late 1920s (2000a, 39).

Arranging a composed piece for an ensemble is based on rules from within the respective genre. An arranger must use these rules, interpret them, and add their own creativity and experience. Even though arrangers strive to develop their own style—or continue that of the orchestra they arrange for—they are bound by the rules that enable a piece to be considered as "tango" (Pelinski 2000a, 39). Arranging in tango is therefore both a craft and an art, regarded as no less important than the creation of an original composition (also see Martin 2014, 95–96). The craft and art of arranging involves playing with sound textures without losing the main musical elements that make a composition recognizable. The tools that an arranger has to accomplish this are mainly the alteration of solo and tutti passages, different instrumentation, and variation of melodic and rhythmic elements, and to a degree, also harmonic variation.[19] The principle of "contrast" and "extended variation" (Martin 2014, 103) for the use and creation of new arrangements is valid for all musical elements. In detail, the rhythmic options include the phrasing of a melody and the playing with time using *rubato*. The character of the piece can be changed by playing with *marcato in dos* or *marcato in cuatro*. The adding, or leaving out, of the 3–3–2 rhythmic formula, *yumba* accompaniment, or *arrastre* are further options used to vary the rhythmic appearance of a composition. Syncopations in both melody and accompaniment can be used to vary and enrich the texture.

As has been said, it is most important to keep the core melody recognizable, but the arranger can, for instance, add a countermelody or a second, supporting melody making use of the basic harmonies to enrich the melodic construct—or take them out to make the melody stand out more. To vary a melody, an arranger can add ornaments, include new structural notes, repeat central notes of the melody, and add (rhythmical) patterns, all this without altering the "characteristic features" of the melody (Peralta 2008, 45).

Reharmonization is another important tool for the arranger. Melodic progressions are re-interpreted by adding new, fitting harmonies, but never moving far from the basic harmonics regularly used in *época de oro* pieces, as explained before. To vary sound density, texture, and structure, the arranger should make use of instrumentation itself; depending on the type of instrument (and number of instruments) that are playing, a melody or harmonic accompaniment will sound different. Combining and alternating sounds (timbres) is an option to either enrich the density or highlight a specific musical element more than others at times. This includes the use of percussive elements (*yeites*). Finally, dynamics (loud and soft playing) can be varied to give either a passage or the whole piece a new and different character.

Interpretation in Performance

Tango music is captured in scores, but what is written down is not necessarily exactly what is played; to give a piece the "tango feel", musicians need experience in tango playing technique and expression. Some musical elements can be pinpointed that influence the tango sound. The instrumental playing technique is one of them; depending on the instrument and its acoustic options, some playing techniques are favored over others. In general, playing "with dirt" (*mugre*) is favored over tonal and rhythmical precision—which of course does not mean that tango musicians play out of tune or rhythmically imprecisely. The art lies in just the right amount of *mugre* and micro timing to give the music its flavor. For instance, a typical interpretation of rhythmic structures is that the distance between an accented note and the one following is slightly longer than notated. This is achieved with two possibilities, depending on the location in the bar of the accented note. Peralta examines that "when the accent is placed directly on a strong beat, the following note is played with a slight delay. In cases where the accented note is placed on a weak beat of the bar, it is moved slightly forward" (2015, 42). Because these elements are not notated, orchestras rehearse intensively to ensure that their interpretations are homogenous. For high performance standards, the micro timing, phrasing, and dynamics need to be precise and synchronized.

Although the overall performance is composed and rehearsed down to every detail, short solos by one member of the orchestra can be included. These solos rarely last longer than four bars. The soloists can vary the melody, rhythm, and phrasing but not deviate far from the material given; the melody should nevertheless always be clearly recognizable. Salgán puts particular emphasis on this, comparing it to the different approach in jazz, where variations can be used much more flexibly (2001, 34).

Tango music of the *época de oro* has clear rules for composition, arrangement, and performance. Its musical structures are based on the Euro-American

music system concerning melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements. The music may seem simple, but the real complexity of tango lies in the details of interpretation, with the melody being the most important, harmonic and rhythmic elements underlining its prominence. This is what tango dancers who mainly dance to *época de oro* tango music expect when going to a tango dance event. Even if they do not know a particular piece, the sound aesthetics and the metric structures that this entails give the dancers the notion of dancing to a suitable tango. However, not all tangos—even if they follow all these rules—are considered equally danceable. To determine what makes a tango danceable, it is necessary to look beyond the basic structures.

Tango Danceability

The following section focuses on how the musical foundations of tango are related to tango dancing. I explore which inherent features of the music, and which socially constructed aspects concerning music selection, are the foundation of what is considered to be tango-danceable. I approach this question using a combination of methods: I start with a qualitative analysis of tango DJs' and dance teachers' perspectives on tango danceability, giving room to their voices and experiences. The next part presents two experimental approaches to determine tango danceability. The first is an online survey which asked participants to judge a selection of tango recordings according to their danceability. This is followed by the description and interpretation of a dance experiment in which dancers were asked to dance to new tango compositions to draw on their embodied perception of tango music. I conclude this section with another qualitative approach, sharing insights of contemporary tango musicians' perspectives and approaches to playing music for a dancing audience.

Danceability Definitions by Tango DJs and Tango Dance Teachers

Over the years, I have interviewed many tango DJs concerning their role as a DJ, their opinions, and their insights into tango DJing. One of the questions I always asked was what they think defines tango music and what makes a tango danceable.[20] The answers cover a wide variety of topics based on personal experiences and opinions. In addition to these interviews, I evaluated data from online sources, as many tango dance teachers and tango DJs with some international acclaim have websites and blogs, where they address the topic of danceability.

Tango DJs—also called *musicalizadores*—are mainly concerned with musical aspects of the tango. However, tango DJs are also active dancers, and of course, they use their dance experience and their embodied tango knowledge to judge the danceability of the music. Therefore, differentiating between a

music perspective and a dance perspective here would be delusive. Tango DJs are a perfect example of choreomusical experts on tango danceability.

In the following section, I cluster tango DJs' and tango dance teachers' perspectives on danceability by four recurring topics: musical factors, *época de oro* canon, experience and knowledge, and taste. I intersperse the text with citations from the interviews and online sources to stay as closely to their judgments and phrasings as possible.[21] In the explanations and reflections on the citations, however, I incorporate my own experiences as a tango dancer, tango dance teacher, and tango DJ.

Musical Factors

Most tango dancers reflecting on danceability in tango mention "the beat". The beat, in their interpretations, can include everything that structures time, including rhythm, meter, metrical structures, and tempo. First, the right absolute tempo must be met: "If you go out of the comfort zone in tempo, the song is difficult to dance" (Pasi Lauren). Then, this tempo needs to be stable: "most of the time, the speed should be constant" (Melina Sedo).[22] Building from a stable, correct tempo, we arrive at the importance of the beat perceptibility. Almost every tango DJ and dance teacher I spoke to said that the beat needs to be clearly perceivable. The use of words might not be 100% accurate in terms of music terminology, but the meaning in general is very clear:

> The rhythm should be apparent most of the time.
>
> (Pasi Lauren)

> So it mainly has to have a clear beat, I have to recognize the beat so that a step dynamic can develop.[23]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

> There are tunes that break a lot rhythmically. Piazzolla for example. . . . That's something that's stressful for people.[24]
>
> (Catalina Lotte Fooken)

> If you have a rhythm that is very well *scandito* [ital. *marked*] . . . that helps you a lot.
>
> (Rossana [La Ros] Capasso)

> Dance music is almost invariably based on recurring beat, and so is also danceable tango.
>
> (Heikki Valkonen)[25]

Within the clearly discernible beat structure, some tango DJs mention "accentuation". Like the basic beat, accentuations should be regular and

clearly perceivable—most of the time—and be located on the first and third beat of a bar:

> Generally the accents should be played more than not.
>
> (Pasi Lauren)

> I would say the strong beat on the one, and again a slightly weaker beat in the middle of the bar.[26]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

> So when you know that you have to use the rhythm, so to speak, for performing the dance, and it comes across as almost unpredictable, then it's difficult, I think.[27]
>
> (Stefan Knauß)

A few tango DJs gave more detail about what they expect musically from a tango for social dancing. Here the boundaries between defining what a tango is and what a danceable tango is are not strictly set. However, in particular, more contemporary tango compositions might break with some of the *época de oro* tango structures; therefore, the explicit mention of these elements as important for danceability is also enlightening. All the features mentioned support one important aspect: the predictability, which is given by the overall form. The first of these musical features that makes a piece predictable is the use of phrases and repeated melodies:

> I think phrases are very important. I actually find music that has no phrases not danceable, or at least not so beautiful. And then it's nice when there is a structure on a higher level than phrases, for example that a melody alternates at times.[28]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

> Also check out the tango's phrasing. A rather "predictable" tango will have regular phrases within one part: typically 4 measures form one phrase and 4 phrases one part.
>
> (Melina Sedo)[29]

> Many composers and orchestra arrangers did indeed stick to the "5 section"[30] tango format over many years, but we are discussing music, an art form, so there are other variations to this "standard". . . . However hidden inside all the "extras" you will find enough repetition of sections and phrases to make it easier for you to interpret tunes for your dancing.
>
> (Steve)[31]

> The predictability depends on the overall composition of the tango. If there are distinguishable parts within the music . . . a dancer can guess easily, which part of the melody will be played when and can adapt his movements to the flow of the music. A more surprising order of parts . . . makes it already more challenging to dance to, when you hear it for the first time.
>
> (Melina Sedo)[32]

Also related to this is the even time signature. An odd time signature will not fit with the phrases and throw dancers off their expectations of length and structure:

> Ideally not some five beat, seven beat, nine beat bar or something like that.[33]
>
> (Anne Preuss)

From all the statements so far, one could get the impression that the clearer and more predictable the beat and accentuation, the more danceable a piece of music is. However, rhythmic variation is considered equally important. A danceable tango is not one that is always clear and straightforward, rather, one that alters accentuations, plays with expectations, and uses a variety of rhythmic formulas. The key to high danceability lies in the right balance between reliability and surprise:

> A few rhythmic gimmicks have to be included as well.[34]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

> So if the rhythm is always too similar or too different, then it won't work.[35]
>
> (Anne Preuss)

> The danceability of tango comes from a plurality of rhythms.[36]
>
> (Theresa Faus)

Closely related to this is a musical diversity beyond basic rhythmical structures based on the instrumentation and the use of the different groups of instruments. Tango dancers, particularly those with more experience, prefer options beyond rhythm: dancing to a melody, or dancing to the line of one group of instruments instead of plain walking to the basic beat. If music offers such options, it is considered danceable:

> Perhaps also the formation of the orchestra. A pure violin piece or a pure piano piece, that would be out of the question. Or a recorder piece. Yes, it should be a combination of several instruments.[37]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

> But everybody knows you can dance on rhythm. But you can [also] dance on the voice, you can dance on the *commento melodico di alcuni instrumenti* [ital. *the melodic commentary of some instruments*]. You can choose but if at the bass you got a recognizable rhythm [it] does help you a lot. Then, if you are a *ballerino esperto* [ital. *experienced dancer*] you can choose what you want to dance: rhythm, melody, voice or silence, or just one note. Or just the single instruments, meaning the violins or the bandoneon.
>
> (Rossana [La Ros] Capasso)

> There are boring tangos to fall asleep to and rhythmically very demanding tangos (e.g. some D'Arienzos). Both take away energy when dancing, the former the motivation to move to the music at all, the latter the concentration to stay with the music. Tangos (also nontangos etc.) should, at least over longer phases, neither under- nor overstrain the dancers. They should transfer their energy to the dancers instead of sucking energy from them.[38]
>
> (Thomas Tauber)

> Tango dancing to us requires a little bit more than just stepping on the pulse or the beat of the piece (downbeat or upbeat). Because we are listening to the lyrical instruments that convey both the rhythmic phrases and the melodic phrases, we must allow these other expressions to transpire through our bodies as embellishments or accents.
>
> (Jean-Pierre Sighé)[39]

A clearly negative characteristic is a singer that is too prominent, thereby overruling the musical structures given by the orchestra. Some rhythmical freedom is acceptable and acknowledged, for instance: "There is, however, some *tempo rubato*, but it always happens in the melody (voice or violins) against and not affecting the beat" (Heikki Valkonen).[40] However, several experts acknowledge that a singer that is too prominent and rhythmically goes against the orchestra (with too much *rubato*) as something that might reduce danceability:

> Some vocals can also make a beat very undanceable. For example, when the singer develops a strong individual phrasing and always pushes himself over the rhythm.[41]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

> When the voice comes to the fore and sometimes destroys the beat, so to speak, then it is very difficult to dance because you can no longer hear which beat to move to. This is a great challenge for many dancers.

> There is singing that supports, and there is singing that is counterproductive. And this is sometimes very difficult to dance to.[42]
>
> (Catalina Lotte-Fooken)

> There are people who, for example, find certain singers not danceable if they are not—apparently not—in time. I don't think that's a problem at all because you have the rhythm inside.[43]
>
> (Theresa Faus)

Finally, several tango DJs mentioned the length of a piece. A piece should neither be too long nor too short so as to make sure dancers can get into the mood and do not start to get bored or exhausted:

> It must be a certain length, so I find 12 minutes pieces quaint, 30 second pieces too.[44]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

> But sometimes there are tracks that are like six minutes long, and then, I think, there must be an arc of suspense. If it's the same for six minutes, then you get crazy.[45]
>
> (Anne Preuss)

Most importantly, even if the basics are there, there is more to a piece than musical features according to the book that makes it a piece that motivates dancers to get up and dance, and to inspire them in their improvisations. They need to have an individual, emotional connection to the music:

> An emotionally appealing mood in one piece together with sophisticated rhythms. That is what makes you feel good while dancing.[46]
>
> (Theresa Faus)

> Music speaks to you. It will evoke emotions, inspire you. This makes the difference between just moving to the beat and dancing, especially if you are a more advanced dancer.
>
> (Melina Sedo)[47]

> "Danceable" is certainly a necessary but not a sufficient criterion when selecting the music for a *milonga*. When I go out to eat, I don't want to be served something that is just "edible", but something that is "tasty". Music for dancing should not only be "danceable" but also somehow "tasty", it should have an "aesthetic added value".[48]
>
> (Thomas Tauber)

Canon of Época De Oro *Tango Pieces*

Many tango DJs and dance teachers define *danceability* by giving examples. These are mainly performers focused on tango orchestras that performed during the *época de oro*. For instance, Steve lists and explains danceable features of the orchestras of Carlos DiSarli, Juan D'Arienzo, the "trickiness" of Osvaldo Pugliese, and the early "danceable" Piazzolla versus the later, "unconventional" Piazzolla.[49] But comments also refer to concrete pieces recorded by *época de oro* orchestras. Rusty Cline, for example, lists specific tango titles by Carlos Di Sarli, Juan D'Arienzo, and Miguel Caló in a website entry about danceable tango music.[50] The internationally renowned tango DJ Balazs Gyenis compiled a series of 52 one-hour programs called "Danceable Tangos of the Year" that incorporate tango pieces from 1927 to 2016, with a strong focus on *época de oro* (45 of the 52 episodes).[51] In addition to merely listing, we also get some explanations why particular pieces from that era are danceable. The main point conveyed by many is that in those times, musicians performed primarily for a dancing audience and were highly trained to fulfil the dancers' expectations of danceable music. In addition, tango music–dance experts mention economic reasons:

> Traditional Tango Music, otherwise known as Golden Age Tango music was recorded by tango orchestras in Argentina between 1930 and 1955. The music of this time had a special quality of danceability. The orchestras rehearsed all day to perform for dancers at night, forming a symbiotic relationship between the music and the dancers, and making golden age tango music the most compatible with tango dancing technique of any other time period.
>
> (Bailonga)[52]

> The sound of tango music, when played for dancing, is unique and needs to be danced with unique steps. Dance steps were developed to follow this sound; in turn, music was composed and played to please the dancers. . . . This feedback resulted in a complete intertwining between music and dance.
>
> (Alicia)[53]

> You might think that communication between music and the dancing couple is a one-way channel, but it isn't. Best tango musicians have always been very responsive to the feedback they have received from the dancers—often visually and in real time when watching the dance floor. During the Golden Age of tango, danceability was one of the key things to the success of a band.
>
> (Heikki Valkonen)[54]

> So, only those Orquestas from the Golden Age who were commercially successful—or who were thought to be commercially successful—were recorded. And that correlates very strongly with danceability.[55]
>
> (Stefan Körner)

Many statements directly compare *época de oro* with newer tango music. Opinions range from strict adherence to golden age tango music as the only danceable tango music to seeing it as only one of many possible tango musics to dance to. Nevertheless, most tango dancers and DJs acknowledge that *época de oro* music is, on average, the most tango-danceable in comparison to any other music. Statements also include reasons that new tango music is not danceable, and therefore indirectly stating why *época de oro* pieces are more danceable:

> There are about 6000 tango songs from the golden era we dance to, there are newer tangos, but they seem to fall in and out of fashion. . . . I personally like all good music, but I seem to get tired of newer songs after a few dances or even a couple of years, but I never tire of the original golden era compositions. I remember when the Gotan Project came out, I would hurry to find a partner when I heard Epoca or Una Musica Brutal, but then one night when they were played at a *milonga*, I found myself yawning and ready to leave. I still love the music. . . . The converse is true for instance when Tres Esquinas by Angel D'Agostino comes on, I might be sitting ready to go, and suddenly I put my shoes back on. That is a big lol since not only have I danced to that song thousands of times, I have performed to it 5 times and still I never tire of it. For me that is why we dance to the golden era of tango.
>
> (Rusty Cline)[56]

> When I started 14 years ago, I too thought that one could dance tango to any music, and I remember Suzana Miller telling me about the music being danceable and matching the steps. I thought she was antique and narrow minded, . . . but it took me 7 years of intense studying and dancing to realize that she was right. I particularly remember something she said: "Once a dancer understands the relation of the music with the steps, a dancer cannot dance tango to anything that is not danceable tango", I found this to be 100% accurate.
>
> (Carlos Rojas)[57]

Despite the renewed popularity of tango dancing, the numbers are not there to support bands dedicated to danceable tango music. The tango audience remains largely a listening audience; thus, there is little commercial incentive for the formation of tango bands playing danceable music. Also, the dancing public in Buenos Aires is reluctant to

> experiment with contemporary bands because the quality of the Golden Age assemblies is so hard to match. The Golden Age music reigns at the *milongas*.
>
> (Alicia)[58]

> I think you will find people all over the world from BA[59] to Japan that would like new music (including myself); the problem is not that people are opposed to new music; the problem is that new music is not danceable and/or not as danceable as the oldies. . . . There are new tango orquestras [sic] popping out all over the world, many are good ones . . . and I think in the future, we will see many good and NEW danceable songs coming out of them.
>
> (Carlos Rojas)[60]

Experience, Knowledge, and Abilities

I group the three aspects of experience, knowledge, and abilities into one category because they are difficult to differentiate as they overlap yet are not necessarily the same. Both abilities and knowledge come from experience, while experiences do not necessarily lead to knowledge and abilities. When talking about abilities, DJs and dance teachers mainly refer to embodied abilities, meaning, the physical skills dancers have acquired dancing tango. Knowledge, on the other hand, is accumulated by active involvement with tango music; it is located more in the realm of the intellectual. However, as this book makes clear in tango, embodied and theoretical dance and music knowledge are impossible to separate, as they constantly inform the other.

In the following, I will start with comments about dancers' embodied abilities and continue with self-reflective comments about experiences, knowledge, and abilities of the tango DJ. Many comments center on the development of dancing skills in combination with the experience of interpreting music. The more experience (which includes both dance and music knowledge) a dancer has, the more they enjoy dancing to "complicated" music. Dancers on different skill and experience levels have different opinions about danceability:

> It's relative to the crowd. . . . "Undanceable" music is music that a majority of dancers attending are not skilled enough to dance to.
>
> (Derrick Del Pilar)[61]

> Your choice of music [as a tango DJ] thus has to be "simple" enough to be danced by the beginners and intermediates but needs to appeal to the more advanced dancers as well. So changing the level of "simplicity"

> within the course of the Milonga or alternating between different levels is the sensible thing to do.
>
> (Melina Sedo)[62]

> I definitely agree that the more experienced the dancer, the more he thinks is danceable, at least with my own case. When I started to dance, even . . . some of the Canaro or Di Sarli was kind of difficult. And now it's like sometimes it's really boring.
>
> (Markku Anttonen)

> I do give the more experienced dancers . . . like, let's say, Troilo. . . . If you are not very used to tango music or not used to Troilo you don't even appreciate it, and then you don't dance. That makes more space on the dancefloor and the good dancers go like *yeeha*.
>
> (Pasi Lauren)

> If you use a song, a tango, with a *struttura densa* [ital. *dense structure*] . . . you can make everyone happy because the basic dancer can use the rhythm and a great dancer can use everything.
>
> (Rossana [La Ros] Capasso)

A very important issue in addition to the personal experience of the dancers is the experience of the dance partner. Statements such as "This piece is danceable with partner A, but not so much with partner B" are common. Of course, both partners together shape the joint improvisation to the music, and dancers hence might consider a track danceable not only by and for themselves but also for their dancing in a couple:

> Sometimes the question for danceability is decided depending on one's own abilities as well as the abilities of the partner.[63]
>
> (Thomas Tauber)

A further interesting statement that mirrors the experience of many tango dancers is that the longer they dance and the more experience they have, the more limited is the selection of music they deem danceable. At this point, I do not want to delve too deeply into this issue, as it will be explored in depth in the section on the danceability experiments. But the following statement shows that tango DJs reflect the issue that becoming better trained in tango dance and tango music can limit what one perceives as danceable:

> I think that's a level question too. It changes with the dance level. It really is like that, that for the first two years you feel like you can dance tango to

> anything, no matter what it looks like now. But if your feeling says that you can dance tango to anything, in my opinion you shouldn't suppress this urge to explore. That's why it's great to say it's all tango. And the further they go, the less they accept as tango. And that is okay. And I think I'm on a three-quarters level now: let's say, I'll accept a lot, but not everything.[64]
>
> (Sabine Zubarik)

All tango DJs dance tango themselves. The physical abilities they have acquired significantly inform their considerations of danceability, as several of them state directly or indirectly. In addition, experiences they gathered while DJing are relevant for their general assessment of danceability for a dancing crowd at *milongas*. Tango DJs mostly assess danceability as depending on the experience of the dancers, not as a fixed definition and truth. At the same time, their own dancing experiences give them the frame for the general boundaries of danceability:

> I decide what is danceable more by the feeling that I—'cause I'm a dancer—know that I like to dance. And that gives me also a lot of confidence. Usually, I feel that I'm right. My experience.
>
> (Kristian Salikoski)

> [Regarding danceability] I can only say, how much do I feel, could I dance to it, or what do I feel for others? How could they do it?[65]
>
> (Stefan Körner)

> I focus on playing music which is suitable for dancing, as a Tango DJ I never play music I haven´t danced to before myself several times. A piece of music, a Tango that sounds beautiful is not necessarily easy to dance to.
>
> (Fabrice Knecht)[66]

Horacio Godoy narrates the story about why he started to dance tango. With this anecdote he emphasizes how important gathering physical tango experience is for understanding what danceable tango music is:

> [The milongueros] made me crazy. Because . . . they say *no, D'Arienzo is not to dance*. And they don't dance . . . they didn't dance the D'Arienzo for example, the fanatics of Pugliese or El Tuerto [Di Sarli]. . . . They stay at the table. . . . And then I played Pugliese and that kind of milongueros they went to the dance floor and the other kind of milongueros from D'Arienzo they said *no, this is not for dance, this is to hear*. And I said: okay, if I don't start to dance tango I never gonna know what is to dance and what is not. So I started after . . . one year and a half. And it took a long time to understand.
>
> (Horacio Godoy)

Finally, knowledge gathered about music is similarly important. This is another issue I will explore more in the section on danceability experiments. Tango DJs see that the knowledge a dancer has about a piece of music positively influences the assessment of its danceability. The better known the piece, the more likely it is considered danceable, and in turn, the less known a piece, the less danceable it seems:

> The primary quality was danceability in a regular milonga environment, at least how I understand that after many years of dancing and DJing. . . . And I skipped great danceable songs that I know to be unfamiliar to most dancers (which in turn alters danceability for them).
>
> (Balazs Gyenis)[67]

> The music must make people want to dance—it must be good for dancing, and not too unfamiliar to the people in the room.
>
> (Michael Lavocah)[68]

> But yes, of course, the skill part means a lot also. . . . The better I become as a dancer the better I know the music and understand it. This, of course, opens up new possibilities and it can change your personal preferences a lot also.
>
> (Antti Sunialla)

Taste

A final topic that came up repeatedly is individual taste. Some of the tango DJs pinpoint what kind of musical features they personally do or do not like. Others simply state that if they do not like a particular piece, they do not feel inspired to dance to it. However, they would not project their subjective judgment of good or bad tango music onto others:

> These answers [which are the most danceable orchestras] are, as with all questions of taste, ultimately subjective.
>
> (Balazs Gyenis)[69]

> There are some that sound dull, boring, stereotypical. . . . Yes, often these are very boring musical topics. . . . And then . . . when it's too heavy. Like when it's kind of blaring, or when it's more like opera style drama. So many late recordings, from the 50s. Personally I don't find that very danceable.[70]
>
> (Theresa Faus)

> I will not dance to a Tango, if I don't like it.
>
> (Melina Sedo)[71]

> For me, the most important factor in terms of danceability is that I don't have to think about what to do: . . . badly danceable tangos are those tangos that you listen to and have to actively think of what to do. Good tango music is when I listen a bit and actually do nothing more than pay attention to the space I have and listen to the music, and the rest will happen by itself.[72]
>
> (Hagen Schröter)

> It's a lot about your own preferences. Like we can talk about what music is the most suitable for dancing, or if you are a traditional tango dancer what music do you see the most. But then, in the end, it's just about what makes you dance. And if somebody really wants to dance something that I don't then who am I to say that it's not danceable? . . . I personally like to dance from '20s to '50s. And I'm not going to say that '50s onwards is not danceable.
>
> (Antti Sunialla)

Danceability Definitions by DJs and Dance Teachers in a Nutshell

Tango dancers with musical experience define a broad spectrum of parameters within the realm of danceability, with varying emphasis. Deducing from their statements, several features are of particular importance. First, the beat and rhythmic structure should be clearly perceptible and predictable. At the same time, a piece should not be too straightforward; playing with expectations raises the fun dancers have dancing to a piece. Similarly, the right balance between simplicity and complexity should be met; simple enough to follow the structure, complex enough to give options for interpretation in the improvisation.

Tango DJs and expert dancers mostly are of the opinion that *época de oro* music is the most tango-danceable on average in comparison to any other music. The reasons given for the high danceability are sociological and economical: the *época de oro* tango orchestras focused on playing for dancers. Their primary aim was to play danceable music because this kind of playing provided them performance opportunities and income. Through years of experience, they had perfected their abilities to play for dancers. Never before or after this period had musicians had such a strong and direct connection to social dance event performances.

Experience in dancing, listening to tango music, and DJing influence the judgment of danceability significantly. The more experience, knowledge,

and abilities a dancer has (which includes both dance and music), the more they enjoy dancing to more complex music. All the experts acknowledged that dancers with different skill and experience levels will necessarily have different opinions about danceability. Becoming better trained in tango dance and tango music often limits what one perceives as danceable. Dancers become more critical of music, and thereby more selective, and they start to prefer music which they know well.

Finally, even considering all the reasons mentioned earlier for judging whether a piece is danceable, it is still a subjective assessment based on individual taste. If a dancer or DJ does not like a piece—for whatever reasons—they will not feel inspired to dance to it, although they do differentiate between general danceability and their own personal taste for a danceable piece.

Tango Danceability Online Survey

Tango dancers regularly use the term "danceable" to qualify music. As stated before, what a person considers to be danceable is based on individual experiences and tastes just as much as on what they learned from their teachers and fellow dancers. What one person designates as "undanceable", another person might find particularly interesting to dance to. In addition, there is no strict border between the two categories "danceable" and "non-danceable"; the range of danceability is a continuum between two extremes, and even here, tango dancers might argue as to where the continuum ends—or on which axis it is situated.

My initial interest was to find out if there is a common ground for tango-danceable music, despite the blurriness of the term. Even more important than that, my aim was to identify factors that influence the judgment of danceability on an individual level. To find answers, I decided to test individual and normative judgment of tango danceability in a quantitative way, in addition to the qualitative knowledge I have accumulated in my years as a tango dancer and the exchange with others in this community. I designed an online survey that asked dancers to respond by rating a variety of musical recordings regarding their danceability.[73]

The online survey teaser page[74] opened with the following introductory sentences, relating the survey to tango dancers' individual experiences:

> Have you ever wondered, why some tangos are easier to dance to than others? Why some people dance tango to music that is clearly not tango music? Or how and why we instinctively know something is "tango" when we hear it? Many tango dancers and musicians have asked these questions. Topics related to the "danceability" of tango music are often raised and discussed. This research project has taken such debates as a

> starting point and focuses on this issue by looking at the "tango danceability" of music.

This teaser, and some advertisements across social media, triggered a considerable number of people to open the survey page, though not all of them started to complete the survey. After a user opened the survey page, they were provided with additional information about the aim of the survey:

> With this online survey we try to narrow down which elements in the music are relevant for a musical piece to be considered "tango danceable", and how this relates to the personal experiences of a tango musician or dancer. The purpose of this survey is to collect personal opinions on the danceability of a wide variety of music to which people dance tango today. The survey will present you with a selection of music which you should then evaluate along several criteria. Please answer according to your personal opinion!

At the beginning of the survey, participants had to answer some general questions about their personal background, all data, of course, being stored anonymously. The first questions were about age, gender, and current tango region. Age was grouped in steps of ten years, starting from <20, 30–40, etc., up to >60. Gender had three options: female, male, and other. Instead of "city", "country", or "nationality", users were asked for their "current tango region". In doing so, I attempted to take into account the cosmopolitan reality of tango dancers, where neither birthplace nor current place of residence is necessarily relevant to their preferred tango region. For instance, experienced dancers from smaller communities might not dance that much in their own locales, instead traveling regularly to events outside of their own city. In border regions of Europe, these events might even be in neighboring countries. For instance, the border regions of Germany/Netherlands or Austria/Slovenia see tango dancers from both sides of the border dancing regularly at events across the border.

These three were followed by more concrete tango practice–related questions. Tango dance experience was the most important of these, the possible answers being: no experience, 1–3 years, 4–10 years, more than 10 years. In addition, the survey asked participants for their current dance frequency (daily, several times a week, several times a month, infrequently), their background in movement ("other dance or physical training experience", which could be filled out with text) and in music ("experience in playing an instrument or singing"). Participants were also asked about professionalism concerning their tango commitment—professionalism understood as making a living from the practice. The possible answers to this question were "tango musician or singer", "tango dance teacher", and "tango DJ",

"full-time", "part-time", and "no". The question concerning where they dance was posed to get an idea if they travel to other tango events or dance locally, options being "*prácticas*, local *milongas*, international *milongas*, marathons, festivals, *encuentros*". Finally, the survey asked participants to state which music for tango dancing they like to dance to. They could choose from the categories golden age music, contemporary tango, tango live music, electrotango, and non-tango and could answer "no/yes" to each of the categories. Multiple selections were allowed.

After the participants filled in their general information, the actual rating began. Altogether, the survey consisted of 80 music examples of 30 seconds each: 40 of these were pieces from the *época de oro* (labelled *golden age*), 20 non-tango or alternative tango pieces from various performers (labelled *non-tango*), and 20 pieces by contemporary tango ensembles playing in *época de oro* style as *sexteto* or *orquesta típica* (labelled *contemporary tango*). Users could choose if they wanted to rate all three categories (golden age, contemporary tango, non-tango) or just one or two. Pieces were grouped under the respective category, while the order in which the pieces within a category were played was randomized. Users could listen to one piece repeatedly, skip individual pieces, but were not able to switch back and forth; once they rated a piece, the next piece was played. This was criticized by some users because they often had the desire to re-rate previous pieces after hearing others, but the rationale was that the users should not be able to actively compare the pieces. Instead, they were to rate as subjectively, spontaneously, even "instinctively", as possible. Each piece could be rated based on five variables: "I know the piece (in this version)", "In general, I like this piece", "I (would) enjoy to dance tango to this piece", "For me, the piece is/would be challenging to dance to", and "In general, I think the piece is tango-danceable". The possible answers ranged from "not at all" (0) to "very well/very much" (3) on a scale from 0 to 3 (Likert scale). The even number of answers was chosen to avoid the random "middle" number check by undecided or uninterested users, giving them no neutral ranking option. Users were encouraged to write additional text (i.e., reasons for their ranking) into a blank field for each piece (see Figure 3.3).

I chose these five variables with the following considerations in mind. The first question, "I know the piece" (short "know"), aimed at the familiarity of a user with a particular piece. The second question ("In general, I like this piece", short "like") and the third question ("I enjoy to dance to this piece", short "enjoy") aimed at differentiating between liking a piece for listening or liking a piece for dancing purposes. From personal experience, and as observed in many discussions, tango dancers do differentiate between the two contexts and have clear opinions on certain pieces. For instance, they may find a piece good to dance to but boring to listen to,

Figure 3.3 Screenshot of the online survey about the tango danceability of music.
Source: Web design by Wolfgang Kienreich.

or interesting to listen to but too difficult to dance to. The fourth question ("The piece is challenging to dance to", short "challenging") was aimed at the perceived complexity of a piece. In addition, this question could determine how dancers judged their own dancing abilities concerning the interpretation of musically complex structures. Finally, the fifth question ("In general, I think the piece is tango-danceable", short "danceable") aimed at a generalization of personal perception, making it possible for the respondents to comment on a piece as generally positive, even if they personally do not like it or find it too challenging, or boring.

Musical Samples

The musical pieces in the survey stemmed from different sources. All non-tango music pieces were taken from the personal collections of the project collaborators who were active as DJs for *milongas* (Wolfgang Kienreich and myself). Contemporary pieces were provided either by the performers themselves (Orquesta Típica Sabor A Tango) or by Christian Martínez of the label Tinta Roja, who, at that time, actively marketed contemporary tango orchestras (Orquesta Típica La Vidú, Orquesta Típica Andariega, Orquesta Típica Almagro). Finally, the pieces for the golden age category were either taken from the private collections of the project collaborators or kindly provided by Tango Tunes,[75] a professional organization that digitizes historical tango recordings directly from shellac and vinyl sources. The eight *época de oro* tango orchestras included in the survey, which

were featured with five pieces each, were Juan D'Arienzo, Carlos Di Sarli, Osvaldo Pugliese, Aníbal Troilo, Rodolfo Biagi, Enrique Rodríguez, Francisco Canaro, and Ricardo Tanturi.

Each musical piece from all three categories was cut down to a 30-second sample for the sake of comparability. The fragment was always chosen from the first third of the piece, but never the beginning. Because many tango tunes have very marked openings, knowledgeable dancers or musicians would instantly have had an idea of the whole piece and rated it according to their general knowledge, maybe without even listening to the whole sample in the survey. To avoid this as much as possible, I selected the 30 seconds from the transition of the second musical part (B) back to the repetition of the first part (A). In doing so, both significant parts of a tango piece are included. But as their order is reversed, listeners are directly thrown into the piece and need to actually listen to orient themselves in the composition. Because non-tango musical pieces, for the most part, do not have an A/B structure, I chose a part of the piece that comes relatively close to the transition from B back to A, that is, the transition from the refrain back to the verse. This was done for the same reason: to avoid the instant recognition of the beginning of a piece and to include two important musical sections in the short sample. In addition, a point later in the piece (true for all musical styles included) ensures that the full instrumentation and volume are represented in the sample.

Choosing the musical pieces was probably the most complex task in the survey's construction. When I first began to search for suitable pieces, I grouped golden age tango pieces into three groups: top, average, bad. This initial assessment was based on my personal experience as a tango dancer and DJ. To broaden the perspective, I had discussions with my project collaborators and local tango dancers. We narrowed the list of possible samples and shifted pieces from one category to another. In an additional step, I posted questions concerning "top hits for getting a crowd on the dance floor at a *milonga*" and "worst pieces—never play at *milongas*" in tango DJ fora on Facebook. I incorporated the suggestions and rankings from professional and semi-professional DJs and combined it with ratings by my collaborators and my own assessments. The final collection comprised 25% "top", 25% "bad", and 50% "average" pieces for tango dancing.

In the contemporary category, the selection process was similar. I chose four orchestras that should be included (Orquesta Típica La Vidú, Orquesta Típica Sabor a Tango, Orquesta Típica Andariega, Orquesta Típica Almagro), based on personal dance experience[76] and recommendations by contemporary tango musicians, among them Robert Schmidt and Christian Martínez. As in the golden age category, pieces from those groups were then ranked in discussions with collaborators and tango dancers and then

grouped and selected (25% "top", 25% "bad", 50% "average") for the survey.

In the non-tango category, the selection process was different. In my private collection, I have several playlists and music collections from DJs who provide non-tango music at *milongas*, compiled through web searches, online communications, and personal connections with DJs. All tracks in this collection have the basic musical features needed to dance tango: the right tempo, relative stability in the tempo, Euro-American harmonic tonal schemes, clear melodic structures, phrases and parts with an even number of bars (multiples of 4), 4/4 meter with emphasis on the first and third beat of the bar (*marcato in dos*). Based on these playlists and track collections, I made the following choices: only one piece per performer, the inclusion of as many genres or styles as possible, and the exclusion of "waltz" pieces in 3/4 meter.[77] In this non-tango category, I did not group into "top", "average", and "bad" but instead focused on the diversity of styles. Finally, the control piece "This Is Michael" by Phillip Boa and the Voodoo Club (1991) was included in this category.

Participants' Data

Altogether, 199 users participated in the survey, leaving a total of 7,197 ratings. Of the users, 57.8% were female, 41.9% male, with one user choosing the gender option "other". The slight majority of female dancers concurs with the perceived gender distribution in tango classes and tango events in general.

Ratings came from a broad variety of "current tango regions". Most often mentioned was Germany (31.7%), followed by Austria (14.7%), the UK (6.3%), Italy (4.8%), Switzerland (4.7%), Europe (4.4%), Turkey (4.0%), Slovenia (3.3%), Belgium (2.8%), and France (2.5%). Tango regions from outside Europe were USA (8.0%), Malaysia (2.2%), Argentina (1.4%), South Africa (1.2%), and Thailand (1.2%). The focus on European regions (79.2 %) was expected, because the advertisements were aimed at European tango dancer networks, with the purpose to focus on this region.

The majority of tango dancers who participated in the survey were older than 50 years, while only one tango dancer younger than 20 years took part. The overall age structure here is fairly representative of the international European tango scene, although of course there are more people younger than 20 who dance tango. Most survey participants (45.1%) had more than 10 years' experience of tango dance, followed by those with 4–10 years (36.4%) and those with 1–3 years of experience (16.6%). This distribution is not representative. In fact, it is actually quite the opposite. In a typical local tango community, the majority will be beginners, with fewer advanced dancers, and even less with more than ten years of experience. The numbers in the survey can be explained by the interest in the

Table 3.1 Tango dance experience in relation to the age of the dancer.

		Dance Experience				
		No Answer	*1–3 Years*	*4–10 Years*	*10+ years*	*Total*
Age (years)	Below 20	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
	Between 20 and 30	0.0%	1.6%	2.5%	0.4%	4.5%
	Between 30 and 40	0.0%	4.6%	8.7%	4.6%	18.0%
	Between 40 and 50	0.6%	5.0%	5.1%	7.7%	18.4%
	Between 50 and 60	1.1%	4.1%	13.1%	16.2%	34.5%
	Above 60	0.0%	1.4%	7.0%	16.0%	24.5%
	Total	1.8%	16.6%	36.4%	45.1%	100.0%

Source: Graphic by Wolfgang Kienreich.

research topic. Involvement in the ongoing discussions about tango danceability, and maybe even the willingness to voice an opinion on the topic—based also on more listening experience—is probably more pronounced in dancers with more dance experience.

The relation between age and dance experience (Table 3.1) is obvious: the older a tango dancer, the more likely that they have more dance experience. The table also shows that most beginner dancers in the survey are in the 30–40 age range. Although the statistics do not take into account differing age structures and developments in individual communities, they paint a sufficient and fairly representative picture of the general structure of *tango argentino* communities in Europe.

The same table (Table 3.1) also shows that the vast majority of survey participants are tango dancers. Two users (1.8%) without dance experience are tango musicians, while all other participants who are active tango musicians (altogether one professional and nine part-time) also dance.

Ranking Results

The following table (Table 3.2) shows the absolute ranking of all pieces included in the survey. It is important to bear in mind that this ranking is not objective and not to be understood as a recommendation for tango dancers, teachers, or DJs on their choice of music. The aim of the survey was not to find the ideal, most danceable piece of music but to understand how individual background influences the assessment of danceability.

The ranking presented in Table 3.2 is based on a normalized linear combination of the variables “like”, “enjoy”, and “danceable”. The highest

Table 3.2 Ranking of tango danceability of the categories *época de oro*, contemporary, and non-tango in combination.

Perfomer, "Title" (Recording Year)	*Category*	*Score*	*Rank*
Pugliese, "Recuerdo" (1944)	édo	0.822	1
Troilo, "Toda mi vida" (1941)	édo	0.820	2
Di Sarli, "Organito de la tarde" (1954)	édo	0.819	3
D'Arienzo, "Amarras" (1944)	édo	0.805	4
Rodríguez, "Suerte loca" (1941)	édo	0.803	5
D'Arienzo, "La bruja" (1938)	édo	0.785	6
Canaro, "Yo no sé por qué te quiero" (1934)	édo	0.769	7
Di Sarli, "Shusheta" (1940)	édo	0.766	8
Troilo, "Quejas de bandoneón" (1944)	édo	0.754	9
Rodríguez, "A media luz" (1940)	édo	0.751	10
Troilo, "Pa' que bailen los muchachos" (1942)	édo	0.747	11
Rodríguez, "Florida" (1941)	édo	0.746	12
Tanturi, "Así se baila el tango" (1942)	édo	0.744	13
Biagi, "Bélgica" (1942)	édo	0.744	14
Di Sarli, "Chau Pinela" (1930)	édo	0.742	15
Tanturi, "Comparsa criolla" (1941)	édo	0.733	16
Pugliese, "La yumba" (1946)	édo	0.732	17
Tanturi, "Pocas palabras" (1941)	édo	0.729	18
Pugliese, "Rondando a tu esquina" (1945)	édo	0.727	19
D'Arienzo, "Santa Milonguita" (1940)	édo	0.714	20
Canaro, "Milagro" (1937)	édo	0.706	21
Biagi, "Arlette" (1943)	édo	0.705	22
Troilo, "Cautivo" (1941)	édo	0.698	23
D'Arienzo, "Yo también" (1940)	édo	0.692	24
Sabor a Tango, "Quejas de badoneón" (2009)	contemp	0.691	25
D'Arienzo, "Adiós corazón" (1958)	édo	0.673	26
Biagi, "Griseta" (1940)	édo	0.672	27
Biagi, "Lisón" (1944)	édo	0.671	28
Rodríguez, "Con permiso señorita" (1939)	édo	0.668	29
Di Sarli, "Todo" (1943)	édo	0.666	30
Sabor a Tango, "Yunta de oro" (2009)	édo	0.648	31
Kroke, "Time" (2001)	non-t	0.616	32
Rodríguez, "A mal tiempo buena cara" (1940)	édo	0.614	33
Di Sarli, "No te aguanto más" (1929)	édo	0.614	34
Biagi, "La novena" (1939)	édo	0.603	35
Troilo, "Marioneta" (1944)	édo	0.598	36
Canaro, "Déjame" (1947)	édo	0.593	37
Yann Thiersen, "Comptine d'un autre eté, l'après-midi" (2001)	non-t	0.585	38
Tanturi, "Viviane de París" (1946)	édo	0.584	39

Perfomer, "Title" (Recording Year)	*Category*	*Score*	*Rank*
Canaro, "Yira yira" (1930)	édo	0.581	40
Haris Alexiou, "Tango to Evora" (2006)	non-t	0.581	41
Sabor a Tango, "Pablo" (2009)	contemp	0.570	42
Sabor a Tango, "Verano porteño" (2009)	contemp	0.564	43
Sabor a Tango, "La Viruta" (2009)	contemp	0.554	44
Tanturi, "Milonguita" (1950)	édo	0.534	45
Pugliese, "A la luz de un candil" (1954)	édo	0.524	46
Almagro, "Organito de la tarde" (2014)	contemp	0.501	47
Andariega, "No me hables" (2014)	contemp	0.489	48
Pugliese, "El mareo" (1947)	édo	0.488	49
Andariega, "Potenza" (2014)	contemp	0.484	50
Andariega, "Andiamo" (2014)	contemp	0.465	51
Andariega, "Retumbo" (2014)	contemp	0.463	52
Andariega, "Sin tu amor" (2014)	contemp	0.453	53
Goran Bregović, "To Nie Ptak" (1999)	non-t	0.451	54
Almagro, "Ahora nosotros" (2014)	contemp	0.444	55
Almagro, "Último tango en Buenos Aires" (2014)	contemp	0.439	56
La Vidú, "Viduleando" (2013)	contemp	0.434	57
La Vidú, "Esa estrella" (2013)	contemp	0.429	58
Almagro, "Miedo" (2014)	contemp	0.428	59
Canaro, "Tormento" (1935)	édo	0.427	60
Almagro, "Dos de Avellaneda" (2014)	contemp	0.418	61
Morcheeba, "Otherwise" (2002)	non-t	0.408	62
J. Pachelbel, Canon in D Major (Baroque Ensemble of Vienna, 2011)	non-t	0.401	63
Niki Reiser, "Tanz auf dem Eis" (1996)	non-t	0.399	64
Herbie Hancock, "Cantaloupe Island" (1964)	non-t	0.397	65
La Vidú, "La puerta" (2013)	contemp	0.390	66
La Vidú, "Tomando algo" (2013)	contemp	0.361	67
Bruno Coulais, "Les choristes" (2004)	non-t	0.347	68
La Vidú, "Mal parado" (2013)	contemp	0.344	69
Bobby McFerrin, "Circlesong 7" (1997)	non-t	0.300	70
Sheila on 7, "Sephia" (2000)	non-t	0.262	71
Björk, "Venus as a Boy" (1993)	non-t	0.252	72
Molotov, "Gimme Tha Power" (1997)	non-t	0.238	73
Erykah Badu, "In Love with You" (2000)	non-t	0.237	74
Jose Gonzales, "Crosses" (2003)	non-t	0.231	75
Hoven Droven, "Syen" (2001)	non-t	0.199	76
Elisha La'Verne, "Elisha Is Not at Home" (1999)	non-t	0.191	77
Alice in Chains, "Rotten Apple" (1994)	non-t	0.165	78
Klaus Hoffmann, "Da wird eine Insel sein" (2002)	non-t	0.146	79
Phillip Boa, "This Is Michael" (1990)	non-t	0.105	80

score a piece could get was 1, the lowest 0. The category is abbreviated with *édo* (*época de oro*), *contemp* (contemporary), and *non-t* (non-tango).

The most obvious result is that *época de oro* pieces rank much higher than contemporary tango and non-tango pieces. The first contemporary piece (Sabor A Tango, "Quejas de Bandoneon", 2011) can be found ranked 25th of 80,[78] while the highest-ranking non-tango piece (Kroke, "Time", 2001) is ranked 32nd. The golden age tango piece with the lowest ranking is still ranked 60th (Canaro, "Tormento", 1935). Tracks by Di Sarli, Troilo, Rodríguez, D'Arienzo, and Pugliese were ranked highest, with only slight differences that are little more than incidental (scores ranging between 0.822 and 0.803). The top tracks in this ranking are all from the pool of "top tracks" from the original music selection for the survey and therefore confirm the experts' assessment on which tracks are highly danceable.

If we compare this absolute ranking with rankings filtered by dance experience, differences can be identified. While among experienced dancers, contemporary tango orchestras rank as low as 30th out of 80 (top rating), those with 4–10 years of experience rank them higher (22nd of 80), and beginner dancers even rank a contemporary tango piece among the top 5 (5th of 80). This detail inspired me to investigate the issue more closely. How long a dancer has danced does not necessarily say something about the actual involvement in tango. A better indication for individual experience gathered by a dancer can be the degree to which the dancer is active in the dance community. Consequently, we developed an alternative to considering the number of years as a filter for the ranking, which we called "scene integration". It includes the following variables from the survey: a tango dancer who is deeply immersed in the international *tango argentino* scene with considerable dance experience (individual dance experience, 0, 1, or 2 points) will usually dance regularly (0, 1, or 2 points), locally (0 or 1 point), and internationally (0 or 2 points); travel to festivals (0 or 2 points); be invited to marathons (0 or 3 points) and/or *encuentros* (0 or 3 points).[79]

Figure 3.4 shows scene integration in relation to each survey participant's individual ranking of all pieces (labelled "danceability score"). It becomes clear that the more integrated a dancer is, the more likely they will rank *época de oro* pieces higher, while the positive ranking of contemporary and non-tango pieces declines significantly. The tendency observed becomes even clearer than in the previous measurement that related rankings to duration of tango dancing. Interestingly, dancers tend to rank pieces as overall more danceable with greater scene integration (averaged over all pieces in correlation to "scene integration").

The data gathered also offers the option to look at the link between knowledge of a piece and its perceived danceability. By relating the factors "enjoy", "like", and "danceable" to "know", it becomes obvious that both enjoying dancing to a piece and liking a piece have a strong correlation to the knowledge of a piece.[80]

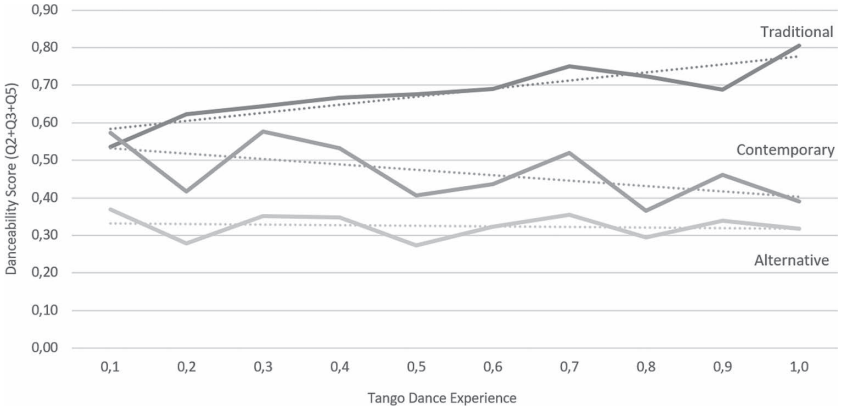

Figure 3.4 Development of individual style ranking ("danceability score") in relation to scene integration (normalized values with highest possible score of 1).

Source: Graphic by Wolfgang Kienreich.

Following this analysis, we set up a ranking in which we inversely weighed[81] all influence factors by the variable "know". This approach provides more significant results than just leaving out the "know" factor, because, as has been seen, knowledge of a piece and the positive ranking of a piece are closely linked. Accordingly, a ranking that incorporates "like", "enjoy", and "danceable" differs only slightly from an absolute ranking including "know". The ranking looks very different with the inverse "know" taken into account. Eight of the top ten pieces are recordings from contemporary tango orchestras; six of them (by Andariega, Almagro, and La Vidú) are new compositions (see Table 3.3). This suggests

Table 3.3 Top 10 ranking of "tango danceability" of the categories "golden age", "contemporary", and "non-tango", with inversely weighed "know".

Performer, "Title" (Recording Year)	*Category*	*Score*	*Rank*
Andariega, "No me hables" (2014)	contemp	0.638	1
Andariega, "Potenza" (2014)	contemp	0.623	2
Andariega, "Andiamo" (2014)	contemp	0.623	3
Andariega, "Retumbo" (2014)	contemp	0.602	4
Tanturi, "Viviane de París" (1946)	édo	0.599	5
Almagro, "Último tango" (2014)	contemp	0.597	6
Biagi, "La novena" (1939)	édo	0.584	7
Sabor a Tango, "La Viruta" (2014)	contemp	0.584	8
La Vidú, "Esa estrella" (2014)	contemp	0.583	9
Sabor a Tango, "Pablo"	contemp	0.580	10

that contemporary tango pieces have the potential to become top-ranking tango pieces if dancers knew them better and had more experience dancing to them.

Survey Data Interpretation

There are three main outcomes relating to the judgment of danceability by tango dancers: the knowledge (and recollection) of a piece, normative forces over time, and individual taste. I will analyze and interpret these three factors separately.

RECUERDO (I REMEMBER)

Results from the survey have shown that there is a strong correlation between knowledge of a piece and the positive "enjoy", "easy", and "danceable" assessment. "Knowing" a piece means that we remember it well—purely coincidentally, this relates to the top-ranked track by Pugliese, "Recuerdo", which translates as "I remember", which I dare to use as a tongue-in-cheek heading for this section.

In addition to this strong correlation, the further analysis of the relation between knowledge of a piece and its positive assessment shows that if "know" is inversely weighted, unknown pieces by contemporary tango orchestras appear much higher in the ranking.

Research into other music genres has shown that among many other important qualifiers, the repeated listening to pieces that are within the range of a preferred music style increases the preference of the piece.[82] A further choreomusical aspect is important for the preference of known pieces by tango dancers. Because tango dancing is improvised, dancing to a piece that is known is less challenging and allows easier linking of movements with the musical features. Tango dancers hence consider music they know—and possibly also have experienced dancing to before—as more danceable.

The questions deriving from this insight go into the direction of why a certain canon of pieces is known so well by many dancers, and why other, potentially also very danceable tracks are not part of this canon. Of course, I do not claim that all tango music has the same potential to be highly danceable; not all compositions, even if played in "heavy rotation", can end up in the tango-danceable Olympus of tango music. However, my research into gatekeeping effects in translocal tango networks has shown that beyond musical features that qualify a piece to be danceable, social norms are similarly important for the assessment of danceability by tango dancers (Stepputat et al. 2019).

EXPERIENCE AS NORMATIVE FORCE

The correlation between dance experience and music preference shows that dancers change their opinion on music as their dance experience grows. The data gathered also shows that most dancers tend to change their opinion in a similar way: the more experienced a person is, the more likely the dancer prefers golden age pieces and rejects other musical categories.[83] As shown, the experience of survey participants is related to their scene integration. Obviously, scene-inherent, normative forces shape the opinion of individual dancers. In other words, individual taste seems to be smoothed out toward a more collective preference, influenced by key individuals like tango dance teachers and DJs.

This finding is also strongly related to the correlation of "knowing" a piece and the positive assessment of it. The same normative forces that form a canon of top danceable tracks have the capacity to form the musical experience of a dancer and, in consequence, the opinion on danceability.

Table 3.4 Relationship between musical preference and average rating of pieces in style.

	Average Evaluation of Pieces in Style		
User Musical Preference	*Golden Age*	*Contemporary*	*Alternative*
Like golden age	71.2%	46.1%	31.4%
Do not like golden age	43.9%	64.4%	42.3%
Difference	**27.3%**		
Like contemporary	67.9%	55.7%	38.0%
Do not like contemporary	70.1%	35.4%	24.5%
Difference		**20.3%**	
Like alternative	65.7%	54.6%	42.9%
Do not like alternative	70.6%	43.3%	24.0%
Difference			**18.9%**

Source: Graphic by Wolfgang Kienreich.

INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES

I must start this section with a prominent "however": putting all normative forces aside, the individual taste in music for dancing tango is, and stays, an important factor for dancers' assessment of danceability. The following table shows the correlation between dancers' taste for a particular kind of music for dancing tango ("I like to dance to golden age", "I like to dance

to contemporary", "I like to dance to alternative tango") with their judgment of the respective music as danceable. As expected, participants who claim to like one style for dancing judge that style higher than the overall average rating of the style by all participants. Cross-checking this fact with the negative assessment brings no surprise either. Dancers who do not like one kind of music judge it lower than the average of all dancers (Table 3.4). This clearly shows that despite all normative forces, individuals have their own taste and judge music as danceable in accordance with it.

I close this section with some fun facts from the free comment section of the survey. Participants in the survey had the option to enter comments about the pieces they listened to. My hope was to get some additional insights about particular choices, or even a tendency why a piece is considered danceable or undanceable. On average, five people commented about each track. Here is a typical selection of comments about some of the pieces in the survey, stemming from all three categories. I juxtapose comments from different users about the same track[84]:

Rodriguez, "Florida" (1941):

"Simple and joyful repetitions—easy to follow."/"At times unpredictable."

Biagi, "Lisón" (1944):

"Great music."/"So boring."

Biagi, "Belgica" (1942):

"Offbeat and surprises."/"Clear beat."

Tanturi, "Viviane de Paris" (1946):

"Intriguing."/"Nothing distinctive about this."

Yann Tiersen, "Comptine d'un autre été" (2001):

"Love it!!!"/"Rhythmically not interesting for dancing tango."

Sabor A Tango, "Verano Porteno" (2011):

"Boring."/"Dynamic and full of drama."

Di Sarli, "Chao Pinela" (1930):

"One of my favorites."/"It is OK but instantly forgettable."

Almagro, "Último Tango" (2014):

"Inspiring."/"Flat."

Di Sarli, "Todo" (1943):

"Boring."/"Great."

Haris Alexiou, "Tango to Evora" (2006):

"Love this music. Very sensual."/"Kind of emotional barrier to dance to such a platitude."

Andariega, "Potenza" (2014):

"It has a nice quiet flow that helps the floor dance together."/"Not inspiring."/"Passionate."

D'Arienzo, "La Bruja" (1938):

"A total classic, a must-know for everybody."/"There's nothing distinctive about it."

Pachelbel, *Canon in D Major* (Baroque Ensemble of Vienna, 2011):

"Who would wanna dance tango to that music????"/"Yes, once in a while."

What at first glance seems to have a very contradictory message is, at closer inspection, a perfect picture for the individuality of judgment: personal taste, experience, and tango background fundamentally influence the judgment of what is danceable and what is undanceable.

In short, the results from the online survey clearly show that there is no objective way to unambiguously judge tango danceability. Based on basic musical features as analyzed earlier—stable and suitable absolute tempo, perceptible beat, overall predictable form, layers of musical structures to base embodied interpretation on—the knowledge of a piece, individual taste, and socio-normative forces significantly influence the individual judgment of tango danceability.

Tango Dance Experiment to Access Embodied Knowledge

In addition to the intellectual knowledge and taste of music for dancing tango, dancers have embodied knowledge. They acquired this knowledge through years of dance training, incorporating tango-specific movement patterns into

their motor system (see Downey 2010, 26). For my work, I define *embodied knowledge* as bodily knowledge that has been gained through physical training and that is used for practicing a movement system. It is therefore also a specific cultural knowledge, and it is knowledge that practitioners have in an individual way with differing abilities, yet striving toward a common aesthetic or functionality, within which variants of movement patterns are found in the individual execution of movement. Gaining embodied tango knowledge is a constant, never-ending process. It is shaped by experiences, style, and aesthetic preferences, and necessarily also the ageing body of the dancer.

Embodied knowledge can be difficult to track, because in many instances, once we have acquired physical abilities, we become unaware of them, or cannot verbalize that knowledge, let alone trace our own learning processes (also see Coldiron 2018). My idea for this research, therefore, was to trigger embodied knowledge about danceability in addition to verbalized discourses. To do so, I constructed a "danceability experiment" based largely on the knowledge gained from the online survey and a pre-test carried out with my local tango community.[85] The most important point was to find music that was unknown to all participants. To be sure of this, I contracted a composer to create new tango music. After some searching, I got in contact with Robert Schmidt, who is a pianist, tango composer and arranger, and leader of several tango formations. At that time, he lived in Berlin, where we met to discuss options. Robert agreed to become part of the project, and when the results from the online survey came in, we started examining the tracks that had ended up in the top five. At some point, we developed the idea to tease dancers with music that was not quite right, meaning, that instead of trying to compose regular tangos that would be ideal for dancing and considered "top danceable", we decided to deliberately play around with musical features that made them *less* danceable.

Next, we decided on the number of four tangos, because tango dancers are used to dancing four tangos in a row with one partner (the *tanda* format), and this typical duration is what we wanted to retain in the experiment design. Instead of torturing the participants with four undanceable tangos, we decided to include one tango that should be the "ideal" tango to dance to. This ideal tango was named "Graz 1". Each of the other three pieces played with one musical element: "Graz 2" made use of an uneven phrase structure, "Graz 3" included harmonic structures that are unusually complex, and "Graz 4" featured a melodic complexity that goes beyond what is usual in tango. Apart from that, the basic two-part structure (A and B), as well as the use and functions of the instruments (bass and piano for the fundament; piano and bandoneon for the harmonic support; violin, bandoneon, and piano for melodic elements), were incorporated into all four tangos.[86] Robert composed the four pieces, and in 2016, they were recorded by Michael Dolak (bandoneon), Mathias Leupold (violin), Peter Blazeowsky (doublebass), and Robert Schmidt (piano).[87]

Table 3.5 Overview of locations and local hosts of the tango dance experiment.

Locations for the Tango Danceability Experiment		
Graz (AUT)	7 March 2017	Práctica Studio Ki
Wien (AUT)	11 June 2017	SaTho-Tango Práctica
München (GER)	4 July 2017	Milonga Bailongo Giesinger Bhf
Berlin (GER)	4 August 2017	Práctica Tango tanzen macht schön
Berlin (GER)	12 August 2017	Práctica Nou Mitte
Celje (SLO)	25 September 2017	Práctica Milonguero? Sí!
Budapest (HUN)	10 February 2018	Práctica Hölgyválasz
Barcelona (ESP)	21 February 2018	Milonga LA Yapa en Caf´r de las Artes
Maribor (SLO)	11 March 2018	Práctica Vetrinski Dvor
Pordenone (ITA)	6 May 2018	Práctica El abrazo cerrado
Tampere (FIN)	12 June 2018	Práctica La Fàbrica del Tango
Trondheim (NOR)	17 September 2019	Práctica Trondheim Tangoklubb

To have a broad foundation for comparison, I wanted to include as many tango dancers from as many tango regions in Europe as possible. Personal networks and contacts with tango organizers in a variety of cities in nine different countries helped organize the experiments in a total of 12 locations (see Table 3.5).

Experiment Setup

Wherever we went with the experiment, the procedure was the same.[88] A regular dance event, sometimes a *milonga*, mostly a *práctica*, included the experiment. Every local dancer, regardless of experience, age, gender, or skill, was invited to participate. We compensated the participants according to the organizer's preferences and ideas: free entrance to a *milonga*, a free drink during the evening, loads of chocolates, small amounts of drinks and snacks, or in one case, an all-you-can-eat ice cream buffet for everyone. The whole procedure was filmed with one central camera, and the area marked. Dancers who preferred not to be filmed were allowed to dance outside of the filmed area. At the beginning of the experiment, we informed participants of the aims of the experiment, which was that we want to find out how they perceived tango music they did not already know in terms of danceability. To take away any potential pressure to perform, it was made explicitly clear that their dancing abilities were not

being tested, and that only their embodied reactions at whatever level of skill and experience they were dancing was in focus. We did not tell them, though, that three of the four experimental tracks were in some way "undanceable", to avoid preconceived opinions. All participants received a clipboard, pen, and the survey consisting of five pages stapled together: the first page was for collecting personal data (anonymously), followed by one page per tango. We translated the survey into the local language to make certain that no cross-language misinterpretations occurred.[89] Participants were asked to fill out the first page and then, if they had not yet done so, choose a dance partner they were familiar with and dance a few tangos to get acquainted with each other and get into the mood for the evening. They were allowed to change lead between tangos but asked to stay with the same partner throughout the experiment. Then the couples were asked to get ready, and the first track was played. We always started with Graz 4, then Graz 3, Graz 1, and ending with Graz 2.[90]

Dancers could stop dancing when they felt they had enough, but this rarely happened; mostly all participants danced to the end of every piece. After that, the dancers were asked to fill out the survey page for the respective tango. While they filled out the survey, the music played again in softer volume to keep the memory of the piece active in their short-term memories. When all participants had finished filling out the page, we played the next track.

At the end of the experiment, we initiated a short discussion as a review, which was also recorded. In this open discussion, we informed them about the musical flaws and mostly got amused and approving responses. Sometimes, interesting further discussions with individual participants continued well into the evening. Overall, reactions to the experiment were positive, and participants stated they had fun and learned a lot about their dancing and tango music.

Participants' Data

Altogether, 208 dancers participated. Of these, 96 identified as male, 112 as female, while none chose "other". After each tango, participants had to mark if they had danced as leader or follower. Five age groups were represented: 0–20 years, one person; 20–30 years, 11 persons; 30–40 years, 34; 40–50 years, 62; 50–60 years, 73; 60–70 years, 26, while two people did not mark their age. Participants' dance experience ranged 1–3 years (91), 4–10 years (64), to more than 10 years (52), and one person did not answer. Among the dancers, 8 people classified as professional dance teachers, 27 as part-time dance teachers. Dance frequency was daily (10), several times a week (115), several times a month (64), or infrequent (19). We also asked for musical education from playing an instrument or

singing: 100 people said they had no experience, 1 person did not answer, 34 people had played 1–3 years, 33 people had played 4–10 years, and 40 people had played more than 10 years. Of the people with musical education, 2 classified as professional musicians, 13 as part-time musicians.

Questions about the music centered on the issue of danceability, distinguishing between individual taste, experience, and general assessment of a piece. The relevant questions for this category were: "Was the piece easy to dance to?" "Did you enjoy dancing to the piece?" and "Do you think this piece is danceable?" The possible answers to all questions were on a 0–3 scale, with 0 = "not at all" and 3 = "very much". In addition to the general questions, lists of adjectives to choose from were provided to help evaluate each piece as part of the questionnaire. Multiple choices of adjectives were possible and encouraged. We compiled the list of 33 adjectives as part of the preparations for the experiment in a brainstorming session with tango dancers and musicians (in German language), with the goal to find as many adjectives as possible that describe what music sounds like and how it makes one feel while listening or while dancing to tango. This approach was a deliberate compromise between staying as close as possible to dancers' unfiltered judgments of music, saving dancers' time in answering the questionnaire, and getting meaningful individual answers. The aim of this approach was to stay exploratory and nevertheless be able to quantify the results. To refrain as much as possible from flaws in interpretation, I grouped the adjectives used for rating the tango pieces in three categories: positive, negative, and ambiguous.

Another optional response was to tick boxes of five different orchestras, stating if the music reminded them of one of these: Francisco Canaro, Carlos Di Sarli, Juan D'Arienzo, Osvaldo Pugliese, and Astor Piazzolla. Finally, dancers had the option to write additional comments in a free text field.

Responses to the Tangos

The straightforward result from the experiment was that the ideal tango (Graz 1) ranked best, followed by the tango with uneven phrases (Graz 2), and melodic complexity coming in third (Graz 4). The tango that ranked lowest in terms of danceability is Graz 3 with the unusual harmonies. Danceability here was determined by a combination of the ratings for "easy to dance", "enjoy to dance", and "generally danceable" with the highest possible ranking of 9. The following Figure 3.5 shows the results in absolute numbers and as a histogram, which gives a better idea of the composition of the ratings.

Participants judged the pieces with only minor differences in the categories "easy", "enjoy", and "danceable". A weak correlation for all

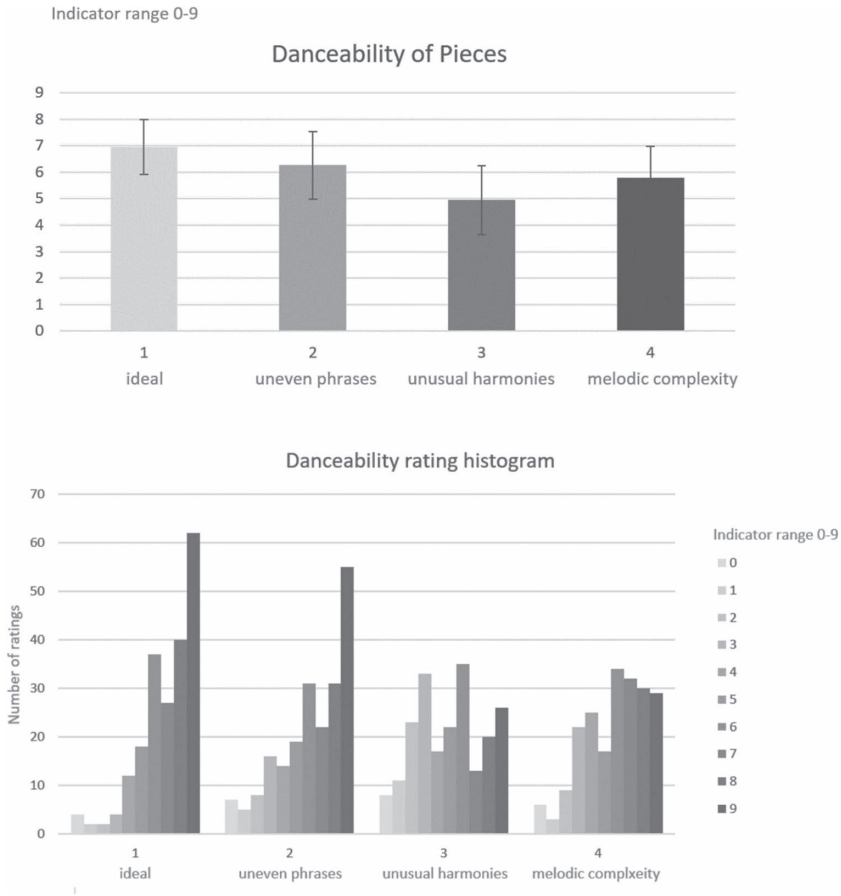

Figure 3.5 Ranking of danceability of the four tangos in absolute numbers with deviations (top) and as histogram (bottom).

Source: Graphic by Wolfgang Kienreich.

four tangos was that the more dance experience the dancers had, the less likely they judged the piece to be danceable. This confirms the result from the online survey that detected normative forces toward a preference for known pieces. Accordingly, the unknown pieces of the dance experience were seen more critically by those with more years of scene integration. This phenomenon is independent from the age of the dancers; only the length of their dancing—their "tango age"—correlated with downward ratings.

We found another correlation between taste or preference for a broader selection of tango music and the ranking of the pieces as danceable. The

more categories of tango music the participants said they liked ("alternative", "contemporary", "electro", "live music"), the higher they ranked the pieces overall. Those who only liked *época de oro* pieces tended to rank all pieces lower. This confirms the findings from the survey.

To get insights into the reasons for the ranking of the four experimental tangos, I present the dancers' reactions to each of the four tangos separately. I incorporate both quantitative results as well as qualitative responses by individual dancers. The qualitative responses consist of the choice of adjectives and the entries from the free text fields. To some extent, I also include an interpretation of the danced reactions as filmed during the experiments. In the following, I start with the ideal tango and continue with the other three pieces in the order they were ranked: Graz 2 (uneven phrases), Graz 4 (melodic complexity), and Graz 3 (unusual harmonies).

EXPERIMENTAL TANGO 1: IDEAL

Results from the online survey served as inspiration for the composition of the "ideal" tango, in particular the top-ranking pieces of the category "new composed" and "*época de oro*". Robert Schmidt based his composition on basic harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic features that define a piece as tango, yet kept the overall structure as simple and straightforward as possible.

The piece starts with a 4-bar introduction and continues into part A. This part consists of two phrases with 8 bars each. Part B follows with a new melodic motive, again structured in phrases of 8 bars. Part B includes four phrases of 8 bars, of which the second to fourth are variations of the first phrase. Before the piece returns to the A part (A'), the 4-bar introduction is inserted as an interlude (*pasaje*). Part A'—just as part A—consists of two times 8 bars with small variations, and the piece ends with B' as a repetition of the first two phrases of part B, with the addition of 4 bars additional cadence before the ending. The overall structure is therefore Intro (4 bars), A (16 bars), B (32 bars), Interlude (4 bars), A' (16 bars), B' (16 + 4 bars).

The melodic structure is a classical construct of short motives of two bars' length, which is repeated with different pitch and small harmonic variations in the following two bars.[91] Both parts have one such motive which is varied throughout either rhythmically or by adding embellishments or omitting notes. The phrases in parts A and B follow the antecedent (4 bars)–consequence (4 bars) structure.

Harmonically, part A is set in A minor, part B in A major. The main harmonies are I, II, and V in both parts (Am/A, B flat, E7). There are only two more chords, the D minor (IV) in part A as part of the cadence, and the F sharp7 (VI) before the cadence in part B.

As said before, the ideal tango got the best results of all four pieces. In the details, the tango was rated best in the three categories "easy" (2.39), "enjoy" (2.23), as well as "danceable" (2.39). The histogram shows a clear peak (Figure 3.5); most participants agreed on the overall positive rating. Participants ranked this piece highest, regardless of their musical experience and the role danced. We can detect some minor differences in relation to age group, but these differences are not interpretable in any meaningful way, and there is no upward or downward tendency.

The adjective choices for the ideal tango are mainly positive. The term chosen most often is "pleasant" (105),[92] followed by "friendly" (97), "harmonious" (82), and "relaxed" (81). These adjectives give a coherent impression of the dancers' associations with the piece as a tango that is just as one would expect it to be. The next term that is worth mentioning in this regard is "predictable" (63), for which this ideal tango got a much higher ranking than any of the other tangos (20, 26, and 29). Connected to this assessment is the term "simple" (47), an adjective that was also chosen by considerably fewer participants for the other tangos (8, 22, 12). These two adjectives confirm that the intention for composing this tango was met: it is a simple, predictable tango in the classic *época de oro* tradition without any surprising elements.

This is further supported by the terms that are used fewest, particularly if compared to the other three experimental tangos. The terms "challenging" (19 versus 78, 38, 43), "unconventional" (14 versus 23, 46, 44), and "unrelaxed" (3 versus 22, 32, 25) are given to the other tangos significantly more often than to this tango.

In the free comments, some dancers found it important to mention that of all the pieces, this was the most danceable and least surprising one. Participants also mentioned several times that it was not particularly engaging or outright boring. A fun comment—considering that the aim was to compose a predictable "classic" tango with no surprises—reads: "Too classical; something like this has been composed already quite often, so why again? Yawn!"[93]

Taken together, the choice of adjectives as well as the top danceability rating results support that the aim to compose an ideally danceable tango was met. Robert Schmidt certainly did not produce a "hit"; he purposefully composed a straightforward *época de oro*–style tango by numbers. The idea for including this tango in the experimental design was twofold: We wanted to verify that the features mentioned by tango DJs and dancers indeed constitute a danceable tango—the correct absolute tempo, a stable tempo throughout the piece, clearly perceivable beats, regular phrases, short melodic lines, and variations in the melodic and rhythmic structures. This goal was obviously met. Furthermore, we wanted to test how dancers react to a new, and to them unknown, piece that is danceable in

comparison to the others that were supposedly not as danceable. In a way, the ideal tango functioned as a control piece in the experiment. The results show that this second goal was also met.

EXPERIMENTAL TANGO 2: PHRASES

We designed the "phrases" tango to play with rhythmic features. In the pre-test, I focused on tempo stability; however, this feature was so obvious and prominent in the discussions about danceability, so it did not seem worthwhile to compose a tango with irregular tempo. Similarly, the presences of a meter and the absolute tempo (see Anagnostopoulou 2012) are both rhythmical features that are so prominent they did not need testing. Bars of uneven length might have been an option, but since tango dancers are trained to walk to every second beat, it is very likely that they would be confused by bars with an odd number of beats, so I doubted that this would give valuable insights. One inherent rhythmical feature, however, that seemed to bring interesting insights was to test the relation of danceability to the phrase structure. As shown, tango pieces are structured mostly in two main parts, and their variants with interludes (*pasajes*). Within the parts, phrases of even bar length (mostly 4 or 8 bars) structure the progress in melodic, harmonic, and rhythmical ways. As explained before, the end of a phrase is an important structural point where melody, harmony, and rhythm come together to conclude one phrase and move into the next. Tango dance teachers often focus on the phrase structure when teaching tango musicality. They use a phrase length as a basis for explanations as to how to improvise within a phrase and fit the movements right on until the ending of a phrase. Therefore, we expected to trigger confusion by breaking the anticipation of the final point of a phrase in the 4th or 8th bar.

Of the three experimental tangos, this one ranked best. The histogram shows that a lot of dancers considered it very danceable (Figure 3.5), but there is also a considerable number of dancers that thought it average. The tango starts with a short prelude played by the piano leading to part A. It makes use of strong accentuations (*marcato in dos*) and *yumbeado*, particularly in part A and its variants. Part A, set in D minor, has the following phrase structure: 5 bars, 4 bars, 2 1/2 bars,[94] 5 bars. At this point (bar 19), the first phrase is taken up again, but now with 3 bars, and a 6-bar phrase "citing" the second phrase ends part A. Part B is surprisingly short, with altogether three phrases of 5 bars, and a concluding 3 bars. Bar 41 brings us back to something like a part A'. The first 5 bars and the next 3 bars might be grouped into one phrase of 8 bars that is related to the first two phrases of part A. This part continues with 6 bars and 5 bars, to move into B' (bar 60). B' phrases consist of 3 bars, 5 bars, and 5 bars. It therefore has the same length as part B. The three phrases have the same melodic

material but are varied in terms of length. The piece ends with another part A" (starting bar 73), which consists of 9 bars that are impossible to be grouped into any phrase structure.

The melody is built on short motives that are repeated and varied. So far, this technique is within the standard arrangement of a melody, but to fit with the odd and differing phrase lengths, variation of the melodic motives is used to lengthen or shorten them. The composer does this by prolonging or shortening resting notes or adding repetitions of a short motive within a phrase. Both parts of the piece are interspersed with cadences that fit with the melodic line and are used as transitions from one phrase to the next or from one part to the following, and of course leading to the end (Gm, A, Dm–A, Dm7). But they never happen at the expected moments at the end of a phrase that is 4 or 8 bars long; instead, they come too early, too late, or not at all.

The general assessment of this tango is quite close to the ideal tango, particularly in the "enjoy" section. Both danced roles judged the tango to be danceable with the exact same result (2,23). The adjective "dramatic" (119)[95] got highest ranking, probably due to the very strong *yumbeado*, prominent *marcato in dos*, and overall dynamic play.[96] The next adjectives chosen most often for this tango are "inspiring" (70), "interesting" (81), "challenging" (78), and "driving" (68). The highest number of rankings compared to the other tangos is found for the adjectives "complex" (52), "original" (41), and "massive" (59). A wide array of adjectives ranked lowest compared to all other tangos. This tango was considered least "relaxed" (13), "boring" (8), "restrained" (4), "friendly" (27), "simple" (8), "predictable" (20), and "monotonous" (9). It is interesting to note that among the adjectives given most often to this tango, there are no negative ones. Top rankings are positive (inspiring, interesting, original) and mostly neutral, describing the character of the piece.

The results, particularly the adjective selections, tend to show that breaking the expected phrase structure does indeed confuse dancers. This tango being the least predictable and relaxed, and the most challenging, is probably due to this factor. What counteracted this assessment, though, was that Robert Schmidt composed a tango that was generally liked and enjoyed by many based on its musical characteristic, despite the weird structures. The *yumba* elements and strong *marcato in dos* gives the piece a power that many dancers liked.

EXPERIMENTAL TANGO 4: MELODY

The "melody" tango plays with melodic density. To focus on this element, Robert Schmidt left the rhythm, metric organization, and harmonic progression in accordance with tango compositional rules. The tango starts

with an 8-bar introduction, moving directly into part A, which is set in A major. This first part consists of 8 bars and their repetition with melodic variations.[97] The following part B in F# minor features a new melodic idea, worked into an 8-bar phrase that consists of two parts of equal length, the second a variation of the first one. Next is a new melodic idea, covering four bars. Part B continues with a third melodic line, again laid out in four bars, and repeated with variations in another four bars. A fourth melodic idea (4 bars) is followed by the last three[98] bars of part B, which are a repetition of the last bars of the introduction, leading to A'. Part B therefore consists of four melodic motives and their variations. A' has the exact same structure as part A, but with variations. Next is a *pasaje* of strictly speaking 7 bars, of which the last is the transition into B'. This transitional part has a different character; it features a prominent *yumba* rhythm in bass and piano, with a melody played by the *bandoneon*. In B', the first melodic motive is shortened to 4 bars; the following 16 bars are again the same as in part B, with variations. The last four of these bars (the fourth melodic motive) are repeated in a slower tempo with an additional ritardando, and the tango finishes with a second repetition of the last 4 bars of the introduction, plus 1 bar of the final cadence, going back to A major via the dominant E7. Although harmonies are a bit more complex than in the "ideal" tango, they are still within regular functional harmony used in tango.

We have already seen that the number of melodic motives or ideas is rather high. But there are even more methods Robert uses to achieve melodic density. The first time each melody is introduced, it is with relative clarity, with only few extra notes and syncopations. But following this, ornamentations are inserted at almost every possible moment. As soon as the main melody rests for longer than two beats, another instrument adds density with a short melodic insert of two or more beats' length. For instance, in bar 10, the main melody lies with the bandoneon, resting on the E, while the violin plays a figure of sixteenths in the second half of the bar.[99] Another example is bar 34–35, where the main melody is with the bandoneon, while the violin plays glissando downward and the piano plays additional ornaments. In this case, there is so much happening at the same time that it is hard to follow any melodic line upon first hearing the piece.

The "melody" tango ranked third in overall danceability. The three categories "easy", "enjoy", and "danceable" each see the tango in place 3, but the difference to the tango which ranked second is so small and well within the standard deviation that it is not a clear result. The histogram shows no clear peak; opinions on this tango vary significantly, leading to a very "average" overall ranking.

Having a look at the demographics shows that there is no significant difference in ranking between the roles danced (2.13 male, 2.08 female)

and, similarly, no considerable difference relating to dance experience (1–3, 2.17; 4–10, 2.03; 10+, 2.16). The groups with none or medium music experience ranked the tango slightly better than those with little or advanced experience (no, 2.39; 1–3, 2.03; 4–10, 2.44; >10, 1.95).[100] Because there is no tendency and no other correlation, I cannot interpret this difference in ranking.

A correlation between age and judgment of danceability is detectable; the older, the less likely they assess the "melodies" tango as danceable. I do not have a clear explanation for this instance either.[101]

The choice of adjectives for this piece is mainly from the positive variety, though none of the absolute numbers are particularly high. The highest score was reached by "interesting" (61), followed by "friendly" (58). Then there is one more cluster of terms that all have between 43 and 46 ratings, which are from the positive group: "inspiring" (46), "harmonious" (44), and "relaxed" (43). Four more adjectives from the ambiguous category are also within this range, which are "driving" (45), "dramatic" (44), "unconventional" (44), and "challenging" (43). There is one negative rating worth mentioning; the only negative adjective which got a high ranking is "hectic" (41). Overall, this tango has been assessed as average, as seen in the choices of neither particularly high nor low numbers of adjectives, and the average statistical results, particularly in the histogram distribution.

EXPERIMENTAL TANGO 3: HARMONIES

As shown in the section on harmonic structures, tangos in the *época de oro* tradition are mostly within the functional major–minor tonal system; the standard harmonies used are tonic I, dominant V, subdominant IV, secondary dominants V/V and V/IV, in both major and minor modes.

In the "harmonies" tango composed by Robert Schmidt, the harmonies depart drastically from these basic rules, yet the overall structure regarding meter, rhythm, and construction of melody is conventional. The tango starts with part A, which consists of two 8-bar melodic phrases (with one transitional bar in between). Following is part B with a 6-bar plus 4-bar structure, which is repeated with variations, again with a transitional extra bar between the repetition and at the end. Robert inserted a short piano solo section of 4 bars, which blends into a repetition of the last 4 bars of part B, with a *pasaje* of two bars at the end. The composition moves on to part A' and part B' with few variations, followed by a section that focuses on a melodic theme which is first played by the piano (2 bars), continued by the bandoneon (1 bar), and finally the violin (1 bar), to end in the last 4 bars of part B. This structure is repeated once more; this time the bandoneon starts (2 bars), followed by the violin (1 bar) and piano (1 bar), with the last 4 bars of part B, which is then extended by a 2-bar final cadence.

Instead of describing the whole tango regarding harmonic progression, I present some exemplary moments in the composition. One such is the cadence in bar 18, which is far removed from a IV-V-I structure; instead, we have two unrelated chords following the G minor (I), an abrupt progression altogether unusual in tango, and particularly in the cadence. Part B then starts with C, which is the dominant to the final F chord of the cadence, but not directly related to the root key G minor. Robert, in fact, stated that he deliberately chose chords similar to the correct functional progressions, but just not quite, calling them jokingly "pretense functions" (*Scheinfunktionen*).[102] The harmonic changes, however, happen at important, accented beats in a bar (see Dawe et al. 1993, 795), which is where tango dancers expect them. In tango, these are mostly the first and the third beat; in the cadence, also the first, second, and third beat. In the "harmonies" tango, Robert never deviated from this rule, though sometimes he adds more harmonic changes to one bar, for instance, in bar 17. Apart from the unusual density and wide range of harmonies, the tango is structured in a classical A–B–A'–B' form.

As said, the harmonies tango ranked lowest compared to the other pieces, most obviously in the "enjoy" ranking (1.55 of 3). The low ranking was largely independent of age categories or experience in tango dancing,[103] and there was no significant difference between the ratings by leaders (1.71) and by followers (1.67). Also, dancers with musical education ranked the piece equally low (1.68), as did those without (1.69).

The adjective selections for the harmonies tango were mainly from the negative range, some from the ambiguous, and only one from the positive range. Of the overall eight negative adjectives, seven were given most often to the harmonies piece. The tango was described as "exhausting" (47), "boring" (51), "confusing" (43), "inharmonious" (35), "unrelaxed" (32), "static" (15), and "monotonous" (33). This is a rather clear outcome of the overall negative judgment of the piece. Three more adjectives of the ambiguous category were given most often to the harmonies piece: "unconventional" (48), "surprising" (39), and "unusual" (41). These three adjectives all refer to the unpredictability of the piece. The adjectives that were chosen most often to describe the piece were "boring" (51), "pleasant" (49), "challenging" (48), "unconventional" (48), and "exhausting" (47). "Pleasant" is the only clearly positive adjective given to the piece. This rating correlates with those dancers who considered the piece overall danceable: 29 of those rating the piece "very much" danceable also said the piece is "pleasant", and of those rating it as the second-best category in danceability, 18 also judged the piece to be "pleasant". Only one person of those rating "not at all" danceable and one other person from the second-lowest category rated the piece as "pleasant". Many of the ratings are close to each other in absolute numbers, and there is no adjective rating category

that goes beyond 24.5% of overall possible ratings, which is comparatively low.[104]

Some statements from the open text fields are of relevance and in line with the negative and ambiguous adjective selections. Participants with musical background remarked on issues related to aspects of harmony, for instance, "un-harmonic breaks", "disharmonic", "too many jumps in the keys", "interesting harmony because of unusual twists", "disturbing changes in harmony". Many of the other statements went toward the direction of confusion and surprise, especially regarding the ending ("unexpected and unusual ending", "surprise effects", "peak was missing—one expects a highlight, but it fails to appear", "ending too abrupt").

Obviously, most dancers feel strongly about the "un-danceability" of this piece. Taking into consideration that the element tested in this tango was the complex and unusual harmonic structure, "disharmonious", "surprising", "unconventional", and "unusual" were a self-evident choice. The positive term "pleasant" was given to the piece only by those who judged the piece overall to be danceable, almost never by those who rated the piece "not at all" danceable.

A group of related negative adjectives describes the perceived quality of the music as "static", "monotonous", and "boring". There is no obvious correlation between dance experience or music experience for rating the tango with one of these three adjectives. Compared to the other three compositions, this piece does not have significantly fewer variations. I can only speculate why participants felt the "harmonies" tango was static and boring. It might be an indicator that dancers were not able to relate to the music; nothing "captured" them and made them follow a progress as the usual harmonic structures do, in addition to the rhythmic and melodic structures. It is also possible that the preoccupation with the harmonic structures kept dancers from perceiving any melodic progressions, leading to this negative assessment. Or they simply might have thought other elements in the music (for instance, the melodic progression or the use of rhythmic features) to be boring, and this value overruled the perception of the harmonic features.

Seemingly contradictory, the "harmonies" piece was also ranked with the adjectives "confusing", "exhausting", "unrelaxed", as well as "challenging". Dancers felt they could not relax while dancing to the music. A piece that feels exhausting does not have the potential to be a dancer's favorite.[105] The number of ratings of the cluster "boring/monotonous/static" and "confusing/exhausting/unrelaxed" is very close to each other, and both altogether rather low in absolute numbers. It is not possible to interpret these results in a distinct way. Much more obvious is the overall use of negative adjectives as well as the low ranking in the areas of "fun", "easy", and "danceable".

The perception of harmonic structures in relation to rhythmic features of tonal music has been studied by several researchers in different experiments. A general result of relevance for the research presented here is that harmonic features have an important influence on the holistic perception of music and have the potential to overrule accent perception within the frame of diatonic tonal contexts common in Euro-American musics (for example, Dawe et al. 1993, Prince et al. 2009, White 2019). Because tango dancers who participated in the danceability experiment are well acquainted with Euro-American music and tango is based on Euro-American music concepts, the insights from such experiments are applicable to tango. The importance of harmonic over rhythmic features can explain why this tango was rated lower than those with unusual rhythmic and melodic structures, although all three were equally "wrong". However, the experiment was not "controlled" enough to state anything conclusive in this regard.

The result shows how closely connected the default harmonic structures in tango are to the feeling of being relaxed (not confused or exhausted) and yet engaged (not bored) with the music and thereby make a piece "enjoyable" and "easy to dance to". Deducing from this connection, I like to call the default harmonic tango structures the "harmonic comfort zone" for dancers. I suspect that if the piece stays within the functional harmonic structures, releases tension in the cadences, and returns to the tonic regularly, dancers feel comfortable dancing and can relate to it. Which of these three harmonic elements is more or less important cannot be stated, as they have not been tested separately in this experiment. Further experiments would have to be carried out to isolate whether the use of functional harmony, typical cadences, or return to the tonic are particularly significant.

In discourses about tango danceability among dancers, harmonic structures are never explicitly mentioned. Therefore, the result that the experimental tango with unusual harmonies ranks lowest is an unexpected and, indeed, surprising outcome. About half of the tango dancers who participated in the experiment (51.7%) have a musical education, and they are probably able to verbalize basic musical concepts. Considering this, the lack of a musical education is not the reason that tango dancers do not have a discourse about harmonic structures in tango in relation to danceability. A more likely reason is that tango dancers are rarely confronted with unusual harmonies. Only very experimental, post-Piazzolla tango compositions and interpretations make use of advanced harmonic structures, and such recordings and performances are mainly not created and performed for a dancing crowd. The *época de oro* canon does not feature such use of harmonies, but they do play with rhythmic structures. In addition, if contemporary, experimental tangos are judged "undanceable", it is also due to other musical reasons, because such pieces usually break many

of the rules that *época de oro* pieces adhere to. If dancers are never confronted with an unusual harmonic spectrum, it is likely that they are not as aware of its importance as they are of the importance of "the rhythm".

General Conclusion for All Four Tangos

The three tangos that abandoned the clearly defined musical structures of a classic tango piece were perceived to be less danceable compared to the "ideal" tango. The tango that ranked lowest was the tango that used unusual and complex harmonies, though the differences in the negative ranking of the three pieces are not very strong. For each experimental piece, we found musical reasons that it was considered less danceable: harmonies outside the "comfort zone", cadences at unexpected moments, and the lack of melodic relaxation clearly curtail the danceability of a piece.

All three experimental tangos have in common that they confuse dancers in their expectations of a tango composition for dancing. Part of the tango dance improvisation process is to pre-plan movements in accordance with the music's progress. If the music does not fulfil the expectations of a predictable progression and structure that usually forms the basis for the improvisation, it is likely to be judged as less danceable.

The issue of expectancy in music has been researched primarily for Euro-American music.[106] An exception is Eerola (2003), who has conducted a cross-cultural study comparing Finish spiritual folk hymns, North Sami *yoiks*, European folk melodies, and African folk songs. His research showed that cultural factors and knowledge of a music tradition have influence on the music expectancy of individuals. Experimental research on expectancy that I am aware of was conducted based on the listening, not the moving to music. Solberg and Jensenius's (2016) study of electronic dance music (EDM) and dancers' embodied reactions to it is an exception. Altogether, the issue of perception of dance music in relation to moving to and listening to the music is still under-researched. My research did not focus on this topic either; however, the results point in the direction that such research based on tango dancing might be promising to gain further insights into embodied listening and expectancy for improvised moving to music.

In a study focusing on expectancy, Solberg (2014) focuses on the break routine in EDM, exploring how raised levels of tension and changes in the music—mainly by taking away bass and bass drum—cause an anticipation of "the drop" and a physical and emotional release of tension as soon as the steady and complete sound is reached again. In a follow-up publication on peak experiences in EDM, Solberg and Dibben state that "we experience music as pleasurable when our expectations regarding it are either fulfilled or violated. . . . Pleasure and emotional arousal are related to our

expectations regarding the musical content being fulfilled, delayed, or violated" (Solberg and Dibben 2019, 372).

Though tango is considerably different from EDM, both are dance music genres within the Euro-American musical system of regular beat, melodic, and harmonic progression. What has been discovered for Euro-American music and applied by Solberg to twenty-first-century dance music can reasonably also be applied to tango music and dancing.

Comparable to EDM dancers, tango dancers improvise to music, actively listening and moving simultaneously. Tango movement structures are considerably more complex than EDM movement patterns, and the improvisation in a couple adds a level of complexity. In EDM, DJs work with the element of surprise and tension to cause a positive and exhilarating feeling at the moment of release (Solberg 2014, 70). In tango, surprising elements in the music—the more random, the more troublesome—cause a severe disruption of the movement flow that is often based on an anticipation of the next beats, bars, or even phrases. Contrary to EDM, such a break with anticipation is not part of the musical structure and system; therefore, the moment of "release"—that is, a return to the expected—does not cause positive feelings. Instead, such unpredictable breaks are perceived to be disturbing for the dancers. By revisiting the three experimental tango pieces regarding their break with expectations, we see that all three do exactly that.

The "uneven phrase" piece broke with the overall form and progression tango dancers expect from a danceable piece. Cadences never occur at the expected moment; instead, they are set before or after the "correct" bar or beat. The closure that dancers plan for in their improvisation to fit with the music could not be achieved, because musical endings (of phrases, parts, and the overall piece) are unforeseeable. The "melodies" piece did not give the dancers the needed breaks for considering the next movement. Dancers were deprived of moments of relaxation and re-adjusting. Pauses in their movements could almost never relate to a pause in the music. Dancers expecting calm moments were thrown off because such moments in the music never occurred. The "harmonies" piece fooled tango dancers' expectancies in terms of harmonic progression. They are familiar with many tango pieces that use harmonies in a specific way, including functional progressions and V-I cadences. This tango used harmonies almost randomly, never providing the harmonic progression one might expect. The violation of these melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic expectancies is almost certainly a reason that the compositions were perceived as less danceable. Therefore, an important result from this danceability experiment is that predictability is an important element of danceability for tango. Harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic musical elements need to stay within the frame of the expected standards to allow for a relaxed improvisation. These results also show

that tango dancers are "culturally trained" in tango music. Through their embodied experience and repeated listening to the music for dancing, their expectancies in melody, rhythm, and harmony are developed and shaped (for comparison see Eerola 2003, 65–66, Solberg and Dibben 2019, 372).

Finally, all four tangos—including the "ideal" one—got lower rankings by dancers with more experience and scene integration. This is confirmed by the results from the online survey, which showed that the more integrated a dancer is into tango practice, the more likely the person is to give lower ratings to tangos outside of the *época de oro* canon. With more scene integration, dancers become less willing to experiment with pieces that are outside of their expectancy concerning danceability.

Approaches to Danceability by Contemporary Tango Musicians

Since the turn of the century, an increasing number of groups have started to play tango for a dancing audience, yet tango DJs rarely include recordings of new tango into their sets, even if it is in *época de oro* style. If contemporary tango music is heard by a dancing crowd, it is at live events, either special celebratory *milongas* or festivals. Some reasons for this phenomenon have been explored in the first chapter in the overview of tango music–dance development in the early twenty-first century. I want to close this chapter with some insights into musicians' perceptions of the issue and their approaches and intentions in playing for a dancing audience. This section is mainly based on interviews I made with musicians from tango groups that focus on playing for dancers: Luigi Coviello (double bass player) and Stine Helkjaer Engen (bandoneonist) of Sexteto Andariega; Dimitry Kovalenko, bandoneonist of Orquesta Pasional; Aram Pizzini, pianist of El Reyes del Tango; Paula García Presas, violinist of Orquesta Sans Souci; Diego Benbassat, bandoneonist of Misteriosa Buenos Aires; Pablo Ramos, singer of Los Herederos del Compás; Christian Gerber, bandoneonist of diverse tango formations, including Quinteto Angel; Michael Dolak, bandoneonist of Cuarteto Rotterdam; and Robert Schmidt, tango pianist of many groups, including Tango Real.[107]

Although there is uncertainty among dancers about contemporary tango music, some credit is given to the musicians for *trying* to play for dancers, with one caveat: that they have *not yet* reached the quality of *época de oro* orchestras. The following statement by Sighé paints such a picture:

> The musicians of the current generation who want to add to the Tango repertoire have a great challenge to overcome, as they follow up to the great creative era of the Tango Golden Age. There is no pressure though. They can and should take the time they need, to create great music. A salute of encouragement to them![108]

Several orchestras have established themselves as playing for dancers or aim to conquer the *milonga* market. Many more tango musicians do not strive to play for dancers at all.[109] Playing for the functional requirements of dancers is preconceived as limiting creative output and musical possibilities. Dancers need stable, predictable structures, which musicians might find restricting (Falcoff 2014, 41). Robert Schmidt comments on this issue, saying that:

> It is difficult to play for dancers or play "danceable"! For normal, classically trained musicians here in Europe it is a challenge, they are not used to doing that. In fact, they do not want to, they are reluctant—they want to make an inspired, personal interpretation, by playing in a classical way. Unfortunately, that is quite obstructive for tango dancing.[110]

However, musicians who do play for dancers are aware of dancers' needs and find the real challenge is to play creative tango full of variation that is interesting yet predictable. Dimitry Kovalenko sums up Orquesta Pasional's approach to danceable tango in the following:

> Repetitive elements in music are very well perceived, as there is a feeling that somewhere it already happened. I mean the rhythmic structure of the melody, pauses, stops, the principle of "question-answer" and of course the instrumentation, for example one phrase was played by one instrument and the other answered it. And this combination is repeated to a certain extent throughout the melody, which allows the dancer to predict what will happen next. Of course tango melodies are varied, if everything was the same, it would be boring. But everywhere you can still distinguish the basic construction of the arrangement, which makes tango music danceable.

Along these lines, Pablo Ramos states that "the dancers prefer pieces in a simple way but with good effects in the melody and the variations, they need to create vibes and let themselves be carried away by a melody that is not too surprising".[111] I was interested in what exactly musicians enjoy about playing for dancers. Luigi Coviello describes his fascination for playing at a *milonga* in the following:

> In tango, the performance of the dancing mixes with the orchestra. . . . I like the connection that I play some music and the people listen to the music and improvise at the same time. . . . It is like a huge happening. . . . There is the orchestra and then a line relation with each couple and within each couple, and it is a huge, beautiful performance. . . . Being part of this and creating part of this is my interest. So I go deep into music for the dance.

Dimitry Kovalenko describes his captivation similarly:

> The most important moment in the milonga is the exchange of energy, we send the music into the hall and we get the emotional charge back. When the orchestra is on a high stage, you can observe how the entire dance floor as a single organism makes a joint movement, step, wave. As if they all breathe in and out together, and all this happens to the music that the orchestra is playing. Perhaps this is the most interesting moment, the moment when musicians and dancers come together through a live performance of tango.

Luigi also states that he does like to play in concert, but he will always prefer a "dancing listening" audience. Christian Gerber adds to this that a large part of tango music repertoire is not suitable for a concert audience, but he loves this music and would not want to miss performing it. He states that "época de oro music is dance music, 'light music' in the best sense; well-written music".[112] Because this music was written for dancers, it should be performed for dancers, and it evokes an active interaction when played live, in contrast to a concert setting:

> In concert, there is a certain tension, focus, and concentration because you present the music and the listening part sits there, the focus being completely on what happens musically. Traditional tango is different, there is an interaction. A different cooperation, your music is in movement. I would not want to play in just one of these contexts.[113]

Michael Dolak mentions the relaxed atmosphere, in addition to the interaction between musicians and dancers:

> Personally, I like the relaxed atmosphere at a milonga. I like the murmuring, and shuffling, and clinking of classes, and relatively little etiquette. . . . And if you can watch a competent dance couple dancing—I play the music and see how they use it for dancing beautifully—that is a special feeling.[114]

The challenge for musicians playing for dancers is to understand exactly what dancers need and still find their own tango groove and style. Approaches to finding their own way for playing tango for dancers differ. Luigi, for instance, states that his aim is not to copy the well-known orchestras of the *época de oro* in every detail and recreate their music as faithful as possible. Instead, the challenge for him is to create new music that builds on the knowledge gathered of the great orchestras who played mainly for dancers and further that tradition—even if this tradition is the

style of one particular orchestra. Though, of course, every musician and composer creates music in a different way and is inspired by various circumstances, musicians who perform for dancers today—and are successful in doing so—base their creations on two important aspects. First, they have an intimate knowledge of *época de oro* orchestral styles and recordings. This knowledge is gathered by repeated and extended listening to the recordings, transcribing arrangements, and studying the scores. If possible, musicians ventured to play with musicians of the golden age who were still active, learning directly from them. If not, they might have taken classes or workshops with other musicians of the current generation and most definitely have made extensive individual, autodidactic explorations. Robert Schmidt recounts his method for understanding and learning about tango for dancing:

> I started in the 1990s in Berlin, I was interested in classical tango. The process of learning—how do they play, and what is danceable about it—when is it danceable, that is a process we musicians go through. And this process takes a long time! Listening, getting notations, listening to oneself, takes a lot of time. And we at least did not have a teacher! But now at least I can convey that knowledge in my workshops, and of course others do that as well.[115]

On the basis of research and practical experiences, contemporary tango musicians relive the music, re-arrange, and make it their own. Some feel inspired by particular *época de oro* orchestras. Examples are the groups Reyes del Tango and La Juan d'Arienzo, who both build their repertoire on the compositions and style of Juan d'Arienzo, and Sans Souci, recreating the style of Miguel Caló with the singer Osmar Maderna. Others try to find their own style, possibly starting to compose new, danceable tangos themselves. Christian Gerber, though, states that composing new pieces sometimes feels in vain because

> the deeper you dig into the material, the more you get acquainted with existing recordings and arrangements, the harder I think it is [to compose new material]. It is difficult to find new ways, to not just "sound like . . ."—you don't have to compose like Piazzolla, Piazzolla has done that already in a sufficient amount! But I am fascinated by new interpretations, how musicians play and keep it alive . . . musically exciting, making sense, and being virtuosic.[116]

The challenge for him and many others lies mainly in interpreting the historic material and recreating it in a contemporary way, which nevertheless offers endless creative possibilities.

The second, similarly important point is that they learn to dance tango themselves. Luigi and Stine, for instance, state that the dancing is part of the "package", and that it is impossible to understand what dancers listen for if you do not have the experience yourself. Dimitry and his fellow musician Evgeny (double bass) started to learn tango dancing when they ventured into tango music, "to try and feel the movements to the music that we played", as did Christian Gerber and many others. All the tango musicians interviewed conveyed that at least some of the musicians from their groups are also tango dancers. Robert Schmidt emphasizes that musicians who do not dance might have real difficulties in understanding that indulging oneself in the moment of playing tango[117] is not suitable for a dancing audience. Teachers who train musicians to play tango often insist that the musicians get up and move to the music, to get it "into their system", meaning, to understand tango in a physical way.[118] In short, musicians need to have both the thorough intellectual knowledge of the music and the embodied knowledge to understand the difference between playing for dancers and playing in concert. In addition, they must build up a suitable repertoire for an evening, understanding the energy flow during a *milonga*. This includes, for instance, being able to play several pieces with similar character in a row, simulating a *tanda*. Some groups even play short intermezzo music pieces as *cortinas*. This way of structuring the pieces played caters to the expectations of the dancers, introduced through tango DJing. Michael Dolak states that he does like to play in a *tanda* format, because as a dancer, he values this structure for changing partners, the possibility to take a break when a music style comes up that one does not prefer, and the security that the next few pieces will be in the same style. His group Quarteto Rotterdam even published their last CD (2018) in *tanda* format, focusing on different *época de oro* orchestras, with *cortinas* in between. Christian Gerber explains how the *tanda* structure was adopted by musicians:

> What works quite well is if you combine sets of music pieces just as a DJ would do it in a tanda, pieces that are related, to create a flow. I think live musicians have actually asked for feedback from dancers and DJs and adopted [that structure]. We have also played cortinas at some point, but I think that does not work so well as a concept; but playing in tandas is something that has been done for at least 15 years now.[119]

Pablo Ramos highlights the difference between a tango concert and a *milonga* in respect of the repertoire. While at a concert his group would, for instance, never play three *milonga* (the musical style) pieces in a row, although this would be expected at a *milonga* (dance evening). He adds that in a *milonga*, the group will choose repertoire with fewer singing parts, as

they consider this more suitable for listening contexts. Then there is also a balance to find between well-known and lesser-known pieces. Aram Pizzini describes this selection process: "I choose a majority of known themes and leave a place for the less known. Because anyone likes to enjoy something that he already knows and thus anticipate the steps or movements that he is going to perform". It is therefore not only the way in which the music is played but also the selection of repertoire and the order in which it is played. The aim in any case is to make the dancers want to dance as much as possible throughout the evening. In this respect, the art and abilities of a tango DJ are not different from those of an orchestra playing several sets during a *milonga*.

Recordings by contemporary tango formations are rarely played at *milongas* with a DJ. Musicians who focus on the art of playing tango for dancing have a particular interest in changing this. As professional or semi-professional musicians, they of course have an economic interest, as they need performance opportunities to earn money. Stine states that dancers are often uninformed or just not aware of the situation musicians are in. She also sees that a tango tradition must be kept alive and prosper to be a true "folk art":

> Many tango dancers just fell in love with the dance and focus so much to go to a milonga and the dance performance to be better and maybe they do not really get to think about how this environment is working, how it is supporting itself. That the musicians need places to play and they cannot just be playing the same music. But also the music has to renew itself to be authentic folk music, something that is showing a place—it is the music of Buenos Aires, it has to reflect the society of today.

Yet of course, the musicians are aware that dancers prefer the *época de oro* music for a variety of reasons, among these that they are better acquainted with that music. Luigi, for instance, states that "the repetition, the knowing of the music works very hard against our new current of tango". Luigi carefully criticizes tango DJs who will not venture into unknown territory to include new music. Both Stine and Luigi suggest that if tango DJs started incorporating at least a few *tandas* of contemporary, danceable music into their repertoire, change might come. Luigi states, though not in all seriousness:

> Three *tandas* of new tango at a *milonga* as a rule. That would be healthy for everybody. Because the change will arrive. We cannot be stuck in 100 years ago. We cannot wait that the musicians of now are dead and have recorded 15 albums, and then be played because it is old. [laughs] no, that is unfair. But three *tandas* in all the night, it'd be great.

Similarly, Michael Dolak considers it essential for the further development and existence of tango that DJs incorporate recordings by contemporary groups into their music selections:

> I actually think the key is to have more live music [at milongas] and . . . that DJs also play newer music. It could be the same pieces, it could even be the same versions! As a DJ one could think about whether to play the original or, for example, play the version of Cuarteto Rotterdam. And that through this you also get people used to hearing new, lesser-known versions, even though it's the same piece. And maybe even dare to have a *tanda* with something people have never heard before.[120]

They are not too optimistic about such practice, but they do think it would be a possibility to make dancers appreciate new tango compositions for dancing better. Luigi adds that if dancers listened to recordings of new tango more often, they might be better prepared for dancing to them. Finally, the key to opening dancers' ears and minds, they suggest, would be to also use this music in dance classes. Because as Luigi states, after all, the tango dance teachers "are the first DJs for the dancers". Musicians are aware that even if dancers and organizers appreciate live music, there is still the issue of financing an evening with a tango ensemble (see Apprill 1999, 77, Stepputat 2020, 59). A live ensemble significantly increases expenses—the more musicians are involved, the higher these are. In addition to the musicians' payment, a bigger room with a stage area is needed, a piano or even grand piano needs to be rented, and amplification and a speaker system installed. To be able to cover those additional costs, organizers need to increase entrance fees but can do so only up to a certain extent; otherwise, potential visitors will stay away. Christian Gerber states accordingly:

> I would not recommend becoming a professional tango musician out of financial considerations to anyone—even less, focusing on milonga or festival program. . . . I don't say that you are not paid at festivals, but it cannot be compared to classical concert programs. . . . But you cannot go and say "I need twice as much payment, dear organizer, otherwise I cannot live on it" then the organizer would say "I would love to pay you more, but I cannot ask for twice the entrance money, otherwise no one will show up".[121]

Michael Dolak adds to this that he would hope organizers might be able to increase their prices if musicians playing live were appreciated for their art:

> The appreciation that ten musicians deliver an orquesta típica experience is not there. In this direction I would like to see more appreciation and understanding of what it means for musicians to be able to

> make a living from it. That organizers also have the opportunity to set the prices accordingly. . . . I hope that there will be a rethinking that it is something outstanding, something special, something amazing, to dance to live music and to surrender to it.[122]

Two currently very active bandoneonists with good insights into European tango dance and music practice—Michael Dolak and Christian Gerber—mentioned the negative influences of the trend to dance at *encuentros* and marathons, which has already turned into a significant problem for musicians. Christian Gerber states:

> The development of marathons, my perception is that . . . a group of dancers tries to create ideal circumstances for dancing. . . . And maybe they don't want to have . . . a lot of music which they don't know, or to adjust to, or something unexpected happening. As a live musician we are completely out of that. That is a different world—to be honest, I do not like that too much.[123]

And Michael Dolak asks why dancing to live music is not considered "traditional" among traditionalist tango dancers:

> The funny thing is that marathon dancers are mostly those who feel particularly traditional. But in the past, there was only live [music], or there was nothing! And this one aspect of ultra-traditional tango is unfortunately neglected. I would like it to be a bit more like it used to be, there were tango festivals, a band was invited, there was dancing, and not a marathon with 8 DJs, but no live music.[124]

Robert Schmidt adds another aspect, which is the problem that dance teachers and studio owners might face even when they are open to inviting musicians to play and incorporating their music into their *milonga* music selections. As said, many contemporary tango formations do not play music for dancing at all, and even among those who do, there are some that are maybe less suited and capable of playing danceable music. Michael Dolak states that he blames tango event organizers for inviting groups that do not play danceable music, which gives dancers a wrong impression of the state of contemporary tango music for dancing. In any case, for organizers, it is hard to keep track of all tango groups and their recordings, so choosing which of them is a good option for dancing is certainly challenging, can go wrong if unsuitable musicians are invited, and might even be considered such a hindrance that the tango dance teachers decide not to take the risk and abstain from venturing into contemporary music.

We see that contemporary tango musicians are very aware of the inner workings of tango dance practice. They strive for tango danceability in

their music through theoretical and practical study and by understanding the music in an embodied way. They even follow the listening habits established through tango DJing, structuring their music at a *milonga* in *tandas*. Yet they know that danceability in the ears of a dancing crowd is hard to achieve, because their music will always compete with the danceable recordings of the *época de oro*. They would wish for more incorporation of contemporary recordings into teaching contexts and hope that tango DJs will open their selections to incorporate danceable recordings by contemporary tango musicians. I end this section with a quote from Aram, who combines dancers' and musicians' perspectives on danceability into the whole that it might be: "And for us musicians, danceable tango is knowing how to transmit a message that must be received by the dancers and thus speaking the same language together".[125]

Tango Music and Its Danceability in a Nutshell

In this chapter I have briefly explored basic musical features of tango, focusing on melody, harmony, and rhythm. In addition, I presented tango-specific performance practices, including instrumentation, interpretation and arrangement of compositions, and the use of variation. All this serves as the foundation to understand which elements in the music are rated danceable by tango dancers. Based on interviews with tango DJs and statements from a few additional public internet blogs, I categorized reasons for judging a piece tango-danceable. These are, of course, musical features like absolute tempo (around 120 bpm) and a stable and clearly perceivable beat. Variations within the predictable structures are important; the tango should be neither too complex nor too simple in terms of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic interpretation. Mostly, recordings from the *época de oro* are, per se, considered more danceable than more recent recordings. A canon of well-known *época de oro* recordings is often used to classify danceability by exemplifying this style based on the fact that recordings from this period were made specifically for dancers. Further and very importantly, the individual knowledge, abilities, and experience in dancing as well as listening experience shape what dancers consider danceable. Dancers in different stages of their development have different needs and abilities for musical interpretation in their movement repertoire and will therefore consider different tango music more danceable. Finally, individual taste plays an important part in judging music danceable; if dancers like a particular piece, it is much more likely that they consider it danceable—in this case, maybe primarily, meaning, that they feel inspired to get up and dance to it—compared to other pieces.

After the examination of definitions of danceability by tango DJs and dance teachers, I ventured into experimental designs to determine

danceability on a possibly more objective level. The first experiment was an online survey that asked for responses to *época de oro*, contemporary, and non-tango pieces regarding danceability. Results from this survey strongly support the findings from the tango DJ statements. We see that individual taste and socio-normative forces influence the individual judgment of tango danceability. In addition, we detected a strong relation between knowing a piece and judging it danceable. The second experiment aimed at exploring the embodied responses of tango dancers to tango music. Four newly composed tangos were rated according to their danceability. It is interesting to note from this experiment that the experimental tango composition with unusually complex harmonies ranked lowest. If the music takes dancers out of their "harmonical comfort zone", they do not relax and cannot enjoy the music in a way that makes them consider it danceable. Similarly, we found that if cadences are at unexpected moments, and if melodic structures lack moments of relaxation or rests, the music is considered less danceable. These results give concrete insights into where the musical boundaries for tango music for dancing are.

The last section of this chapter looked at contemporary musicians' approaches to danceability, particularly the reasons and methods they apply in playing for a dancing audience. I demonstrated that learning to perform for dancers is a difficult task that needs a lot of experience. An important aspect of their approach is to learn to dance themselves and to become well acquainted with *época de oro* material so they are able to understand what dancers need. The desire that their music would be appreciated more by dancers and tango DJs is connected to their aim to further develop the art of playing danceable tango music, keeping it alive and prospering in conjuncture with tango as social dance practice.

Notes

1 Melodic lines and phrases in tango often closely relate to tango lyrics. This is mirrored in the term *cantando* that is also attributed to *ligado* melodies. Also see García Brunelli (2016) on the topic of *fraseo*'s relations to speech patterns in Argentinian Spanish and its implementation in tango in historic and present contexts.
2 *La Melodía debe exponerse con toda claridad* (Salgán 2001, 33). Salgán focuses on tango parts in which melody is prominent in opposition to rhythmic parts—however, even in rhythmic parts, a melody is present and an important element of the composition.
3 *Para que aquel oyente que no conoce el tema y que lo escucha por primera vez, tenga una idea clara del mismo* (Salgán 2001, 33).
4 See Peralta (2008, 50) for examples when and how lines may cross.
5 See the graphic positioning of famous orchestras on such an "approximated" continuum in Peralta (2008, 56).
6 According to Peralta, the *bordoneo* "reflects the legacy and influence of folkloristic music from the Argentinian pampas in the tango. Its name derives

from the word 'bordona' which refers to the fourth, fifth, sixth strings of the guitar" (Peralta 2015, 78).

7 3–3–2 refers to the number of sub-beats (quarter notes) one counts until the next accented note of the pattern is played: one two three one to three one two. See Figure 3.1, first bar.

8 Peralta (2015, 35), footnote 6. Also see there the notation for *arrastre* with a starting accent and without a starting accent.

9 *El "arrastre" puede considerarse casi un efecto de percusión, puesto que con él no se busca una claridad tonal sino, por el contrario, un efecto rítmico de sonoridad imprecisa*.

10 The bandoneonist Eduardo Arolas is credited as having introduced the *arrastre* into tango (Link and Wendland 2016, 95).

11 Peralta (2015, 189) includes a full list of possible percussion features on all instruments of a tango ensemble.

12 See, for instance, a demonstration of the tambor and other tango sound effects by Caroline Pearsall of the London Tango Orchestra on the Stradmagazine YouTube channel: https://youtu.be/jB0aMXymQeU.

13 See, for instance, Martin (2014), who compares the interpretation of the same composition by four tango orchestras (Troilo, Pugliese, Salgán, and Piazzolla).

14 See literature on the bandoneon in tango, for example, Mauriño (2009) Krapovickas (2012), Wolff (2018).

15 Some orchestras in the *época de oro* added additional instruments; maybe the most well-known is Osvaldo Fresedo, who included a harp and a vibraphone in his *orquesta*.

16 Now also called *sexteto típico* to differentiate orchestras with more musicians from this smaller ensemble.

17 Both Peralta and Salgán give explicit details and examples for rules of instrumentation, as well as uses and functions of the instruments included in tango (see Salgán 2001, 59–135; Peralta 2008, 143–193).

18 See Peralta (2008, 145–189), who gives detailed instructions for how to use the instruments, including their range and sound options in an arrangement.

19 See also Martin (2014, 100–101), who has compiled a list with the options an arranger has to imprint a style onto a composition.

20 Note that the analysis here is limited to tango music. The issue why alternative (non-tango) music can be considered tango-danceable is a fascinating topic, which should be explored further but goes beyond the scope of this book.

21 Excerpts from interviews with Markku Anttonen (Tampere, 8 October 2010), Kristian Salikoski (Tampere, 14 October 2010), Pasi Lauren (Tampere, 14 October 2010), Anne Preuss (Halle an der Saale, 22 October 2010), Stefan Knauß (Halle an der Saale, 23 October 2010), Antti Sunialla (Halle an der Saale, 26 October 2010), Rossana [La Ros] Capasso (Halle an der Saale, 27 October 2010), Thomas Tauber (15 November 2010, written form), Catalina Lotte-Fooken (Bremen, 10 May 2011), Sabine Zubarik (Erfurt, 2 March 2012), Theresa Faus (Erfurt, 3 March 2012), Stefan Körner (Graz, 19 February 2013), Hagen Schröter (Berlin, July 2013), and Horacio Godoy (Vienna, 13 May 2014). If the interview was conducted in another language than English, the original language is added in an endnote.

22 Melina Sedo: What makes music danceable? Posting from 12 November 2010. See https://melinas-two-cent.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-makes-music-danceable.html.

23 *Also es muss hauptsächlich einen klaren Beat haben, ich muss den Beat erkennen, damit sich eine Step-dynamik entwickeln kann.*
24 *Es gibt Sachen, die rhythmisch sehr brechen. Piazzolla zum Beispiel. . . . Das ist zum Beispiel was, das stressig ist für die Leute.*
25 Tango in Depth, a blog about classical tango music by Heikki Valkonen, tango enthusiast, arranger, bandleader, and DJ. See http://tangopluma.com/blog/post/2014/06/05/Di-Sarli-vs-Pugliese-Melodic-Tango.aspx.
26 *Dann würde ich sagen, der starke Beat auf der eins, und nochmal ein etwas schwächerer in der Mitte vom Takt.*
27 *Also wenn man weiß, man muss sozusagen mit dem Rhythmus arbeiten beim tänzerischen Umsetzen, und der kommt aber fast unberechenbar daher, dann ist es schwierig, denk' ich.*
28 *Phrasen finde ich ganz wichtig. Eine Musik, die keine Phrasen hat, finde ich eigentlich nicht so gut tanzbar oder ist nicht so schön. Und dann ist auch schön, wenn es so eine phrasenübergeordnete Struktur gibt, zum Beispiel dass sich so eine Melodie stellenweise abwechselt.*
29 Melina Sedo: What makes music danceable? Posting from 12 November 2010. See https://melinas-two-cent.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-makes-music-danceable.html.
30 Steve uses the term "five sections" for an A B A'B'A" part structure.
31 Steve from Tango Elegante, tango dance school in Watford (UK). Steve has posted a series of blog entries about tango musicality, closely relating it to danceability. See https://eleganttango.com/musicality-in-tango-dancing-part-4/.
32 Melina Sedo: What makes music danceable? Posting from 12 November 2010. See https://melinas-two-hcent.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-makes-music-danceable.html.
33 *Im günstigsten Fall nicht irgendein Fünfer, Siebener, Neuner oder sonst irgendwas.*
34 *Ein paar rhythmische Spielereien, das muss irgendwie auch noch vorkommen.*
35 *Also wenn der Rhythmus irgendwie zu gleich ist oder zu unterschiedlich, dann wird es nicht funktionieren.*
36 *Die Tanzbarkeit von Tango, die kommt von dieser Vielfalt von Rhythmen.*
37 *Vielleicht auch die Orchester-Zusammensetzung. Ein pures Geigenstück oder ein pures Klavierstück, das würde rausfallen. Oder ein Blockflötenstück. Ja, es sollte schon eine Zusammensetzung von mehreren Instrumenten sein.*
38 *Es gibt langweilige Tangos zum Einschlafen und rhythmisch sehr anspruchsvolle Tangos (z.B. manche D'Arienzos). Beides kostet beim Tanzen Energie, bei ersteren für die Motivation sich überhaupt zu der Musik zu bewegen, bei den zweitgenannten für die Konzentration, bei der Musik zu bleiben. Tangos (auch Nontangos usw.) sollten aber, zumindest über längere Phasen, die Tänzer weder unter- noch überfordern. Sie sollten ihre Energie auf die Tänzer übertragen, statt Energie von diesen abzusaugen.*
39 Jean-Pierre Sighé, dance teacher and musician in Berkeley, California. See www.tangomagdalena.com/dancing_tango_on_tango.html written October 2007.
40 Tango in Depth, a blog about classical tango music by Heikki Valkonen, tango enthusiast, arranger, bandleader, and DJ. See http://tangopluma.com/blog/post/2014/06/05/Di-Sarli-vs-Pugliese-Melodic-Tango.aspx.
41 *Mancher Gesang kann auch einen Beat sehr untanzbar machen. Zum Beispiel wenn der Sänger eine große Eigengestaltung entwickelt und stößt sich immer über den Rhythmus hinweg.*

42 *Wenn die Stimme sehr in den Vordergrund dringt und manchmal den Beat sozusagen kaputt macht, dann ist es sehr schwer zu tanzen, weil man dann nicht mehr hört, zu welchem Beat man sich bewegen soll. Das ist für viele Tänzer eine große Herausforderung. Es gibt Gesang, der unterstützt was, und es gibt Gesang, der läuft kontraproduktiv. Und der ist manchmal sehr schwer tanzbar.*
43 *Ansonsten, es gibt ja Leute, die finden zum Beispiel bestimmte Sänger nicht tanzbar, wenn die nicht—scheinbar nicht—im Takt sind, also drüber. Das find' ich überhaupt kein Problem, weil den Takt, den hat man im Inneren.*
44 *Es muss eine gewisse Länge haben, also 12 Minuten-Stücke finde ich urig, 30 Sekunden-Stücke auch.*
45 *Aber manchmal sind ja so Sachen auch gerne mal sechs Minuten lang, und da, glaube ich, braucht es eine Dramatik. Wenn das dann sechs Minuten gleich ist, dann wird man bescheuert.*
46 *Eine gefühlsmäßig ansprechende Stimmung in einem Stück zusammen mit raffinierten Rhythmen. Das ist eigentlich, was beim Tanzen wohl möglichst Laune macht.*
47 Melina Sedo: What makes music danceable? Posting from 12 November 2010. See https://melinas-two-cent.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-makes-music-danceable.html.
48 *'Tanzbar' ist bei der Auswahl der Musik für eine Milonga sicher ein notwendiges, aber kein hinreichendes Kriterium. Wenn ich zum Essen ausgehe, möchte ich ja auch nicht etwas vorgesetzt bekommen, das nur mal eben 'essbar' ist, sondern etwas, das möglichst auch 'lecker' ist. Musik zum Tanzen sollte auch nicht nur 'tanzbar' sondern irgendwie auch 'lecker' sein, sollte quasi einen 'ästhetischen Mehrwert' besitzen.*
49 Tango Elegante, tango dance school in Pinner, Middlesex, and Watford Hertfordshire (UK), dedicating eight entries on their website to "musicality in tango dancing". See https://eleganttango.com/category/tango-technique/musical-interpretation/.
50 See http://learn-to-tango.com/danceable-argentine-tango-music/, Rusty Cline, tango dance teacher in Tucson, Arizona.
51 Balazs runs the online tango radio station "Argentine Tango Radio", where the series "Danceable Tangos of the Year" was hosted. See www.argentinetangoradio.com/dtoty/.
52 www.bailonga.org/music/. Bailonga Tango, a volunteer-run organization focusing on organizing *milongas* in Eugene, Oregon. Website "traditional tango music", unknown author.
53 www.bendtango.com/cell2-2.html (website possibly from 2014), posting "Music Danceable as Tango" by Alicia, tango dance teacher in Bend, Oregon, USA.
54 Tango in Depth, a blog about classical tango music by Heikki Valkonen, tango enthusiast, arranger, bandleader, and DJ. See http://tangopluma.com/blog/post/2014/06/05/Di-Sarli-vs-Pugliese-Melodic-Tango.aspx.
55 *Also, auch bei den Orquestas aus der Goldenen Zeit wurden ja nur die aufgenommen, die kommerziell erfolgreich waren, oder von denen gedacht wurde, dass es kommerziell erfolgreich ist. Und das korreliert sehr stark mit Tanzbarkeit.*
56 See http://learn-to-tango.com/danceable-argentine-tango-music/, Rusty Cline, tango dance teacher in Tucson, Arizona.
57 Carlos Rojas, posting from 15 August 2010, hosted at www.bendtango.com/Portland_Tango_Announcements.pdf.

58 www.bendtango.com/cell2-2.html (website possibly from 2014), posting "Music Danceable as Tango" by Alicia, tango dance teacher in Bend, Oregon, USA.
59 BA or BsAs is short for Buenos Aires.
60 Carlos Rojas, posting from 15 August 2010, hosted at www.bendtango.com/Portland_Tango_Announcements.pdf.
61 Answer to a posting on Facebook by user "terpsichoral tangoaddict" about why some tangos are considered "undanceable", 4 October 2013.
62 Melina Sedo: "What makes music danceable?" Posting from 12 November 2010. See https://melinas-two-cent.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-makes-music-danceable.html.
63 *Manchmal entscheidet sich die Frage nach der Tanzbarkeit eines Tangos auch nach den eigenen Fähigkeiten und den Fähigkeiten des Tanzpartners.*
64 *Ich glaube das ist auch eine Level-Frage. Also das verändert sich mit dem Tanzlevel. Das ist wirklich so, dass du in den ersten zwei Jahren kannst du dem Gefühl nach auf alles Tango tanzen, egal wie das jetzt aussieht. Aber wenn dein Gefühl sagt, du kannst auf alles Tango tanzen, diesen Entdeckungsdrang sollte man meiner Meinung nach auch nicht nehmen. Deswegen ist es auch toll, wenn ich sage, es ist alles Tango. Und je weiter die gehen, desto weniger akzeptieren die als Tango. Das ist auch okay. Und ich bin, glaube ich, so bei einem Drei-Viertel-Ansatz: ich akzeptiere sagen wir viel, aber nicht mehr alles.*
65 *[Was die Tanzbarkeit ausmacht] kann ich nur bis zu der Stelle auswendig sagen, wie weit kann für mein Gefühl, könnte ich darauf tanzen, oder was kann ich erfühlen bei anderen? Wie könnten die das?*
66 Fabrice Knecht, festival and marathon tango DJ from Denmark. See https://tangoargentino.dk/en-tango-dj/.
67 On his website, Balazs has the entry "which are the top 3 argentine tango orchestras", where he statistically analyzes his selections of danceable tracks for a series of radio streaming sessions "Danceable Tangos of the Year", mentioned earlier. See https://balazstango.blogspot.com/2016/10/which-are-top-3-argentine-tango.html.
68 The role of the DJ, written in 2015 for todotango by international tango DJ and author Michael Lavocah. See www.todotango.com/english/history/chronicle/481/Tango-DJing-Part-1:-Music-for-dancing/
69 See https://balazstango.blogspot.com/2016/10/which-are-top-3-argentine-tango.html.
70 *Da gibt's welche, die klingen öde, langweilig, stereotyp . . . Ja, oft sind's ganz langweilige musikalische Themen. . . . Und dann . . . wenn's zu wuchtig ist. Also, wenn's so dröhnt, oder wenn es mehr von einer opernmäßigen Dramatik ist. So viele späte Sachen, 50er Jahre. Das find' ich auch nicht so gut tanzbar.*
71 Melina Sedo: "What makes music danceable?" Posting from 12 November 2010. See https://melinas-two-cent.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-makes-music-danceable.html.
72 *Für mich ist der wichtigste Faktor in Sachen Tanzbarkeit, dass ich nicht nachdenken muss, um auszuwählen, was ich mache: . . . zu den schlecht tanzbaren Stücken, zähle ich auch die schlechten Tangos, bei denen man zuhört, und sich was ausdenken muss. Gute Tangomusik da hör' ich zu und mach' eigentlich nichts weiter als ein bisschen auf den Raum achten, den ich habe. und der Musik zuzuhören, und der Rest passiert von selber.*
73 Detailed results from this survey, with a focus on the empirical data collection and analysis, have been published in Stepputat et al. (2019). Here I focus on results concerning the danceability aspect.

74 The online survey was hosted on the website www.dancetangomusic.com. Data was gathered from February 2016 until September 2017. The survey was conducted in the English language.
75 See Tango Tunes digital Tango music store at www.tangotunes.com.
76 I was able to experience some of the ensembles featured in the survey as a dancer at *milongas* with live music in Buenos Aires or at festivals across Europe.
77 Unfortunately, a non-tango waltz (Niki Reiser, "Tanz auf dem Eis" 2010) made its way into the survey, a simple oversight.
78 New compositions by contemporary tango orchestras rank even lower: the highest ranking for a new composition is "No me hables" by Andariega, on 48 of 80.
79 The "we" in this section acknowledges the collaboration in this aspect of the data analysis with Wolfgang Kienreich, who contributed with his statistical skills as well as tango community and music insights.
80 The relation was determined by use of Pearson's correlation coefficient, which showed a strong relation between "like" and "know" (+0.6), "danceable" and "know" (+0.51), and "enjoy" and "know" (+0.56). The strongest correlation exists between "like" and "enjoy" (+0.81), "danceable" and "enjoy" (+0.77), and "like" and "danceable" (+0.65). The results are unambiguous and statistically valid.
81 The formula we used for factoring in "know" inversely is: (like + enjoy + danceable) × (1 - know).
82 See, for instance, Witvliet and Vrana (2007) and Schäfer and Sedlmeier (2010).
83 Whether individual development, and with it a tango dancer's taste in music, is bound temporally to more general developments in the *tango argentino* scene as we have seen them in the last 30 years, or if a typical development toward *época de oro* preference can be identified regardless of general trends, is a promising topic of further research that has to be explored in depth. From my current knowledge, I consider both options plausible.
84 The first row is the name of the composer, title, and year of recording. The following rows are anonymous comments about the respective piece.
85 See Stepputat (forthcoming) for a thorough description of the pre-test design and results.
86 The complete scores and the recordings of the four compositions are available online as part of the accompanying material. See:
Graz 1 (recording): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121089
Graz 1 (score): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121088
Graz 2 (recording): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:12109
Graz 2 (score): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121091
Graz 3 (recording): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121092
Graz 3 (score): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121093
Graz 4 (recording): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121094
Graz 4 (score): https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121095
87 The recording session took place at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (KUG), supervised by Ulrich Katzenberger, recording producer and sound engineer.
88 The "we" here refers to colleagues who helped organize and carry out tests in Tampere (Eline Seye), Trondheim (Mattia Scassellati), and Barcelona (Lluís Solsona Sabanés).

89 Translations were made by Hjard Rune Jensen, Rebeka Kunej, Zoltán Németh, Mattia Scassellati, Elina Seye, and Lluís Solsona Sabanés.
90 Due to a technical error, the order of tracks in Budapest was 1,2,3,4.
91 See bar 5–6 for the part A motive, bar 21–22 for the part B motive.
92 The percentage shows the number of people out of all the participants (208) who chose this term for this piece.
93 *Zu klassisch; ist bereits oftmals ähnliches komponiert worden, also dann wozu? Gähn!*
94 These two phrases might also be grouped in 3 bars and 3 1/2 bars; the ambiguity of where one phrase ends and the other starts is of course deliberate.
95 This is the highest ranking any adjective got for any tango.
96 Participants associated this piece mostly with the music of Piazzolla and Pugliese, both known for their strong *marcato in dos* and dynamics.
97 The last phrase has an added bar, which functions as a transition into part B.
98 The extra bar at the end of part A is compensated by ending this part one bar short.
99 Note that in addition to the notated material, Schmidt adds many more ornamentations to his playing in the recording.
100 The difference in numbers is outside of the standard deviation.
101 We checked if the preference for golden age tangos over contemporary correlates with age, but that is not the case.
102 Personal conversation, 24 August 2020.
103 The variation of values between the age and the dance experience categories lies well within the standard deviation range. Age category values were: 2.00, 2.27, 1.62, 1.62, 1.79, and 1.50; experience in tango dancing: 1.80, 1.71, and 1.53.
104 Other tangos received some much clearer ratings in single-adjective categories, for instance, 50.5% of the participants rated the "ideal" tango "pleasant".
105 The exhaustion here refers to a negative, mental exhaustion, not a physical one, which can be a positive experience.
106 See, for instance, an overview of previous research in Eerola (2003), Huron (2006), and Solberg (2014).
107 Interview with Robert Schmidt (Graz, November 2016); online interviews with Stine Helkjaer-Engen and Luigi Coviello (10 January 2021), Christian Gerber (7 September 2021), Michael Dolak (15 September 2021). Online written exchange with Dimitry Kovalenko (31 August 2021), Paula García Presas (31 August 2021), Diego Benbassat (4 September 2021), Aram Pizzini (1 September 2021), and Pablo Ramos (3 September 2021).
108 Posting "Dancing Tango on Tango" by Jean-Pierre Sighé, dance teacher and musician in Berkeley, California, at www.tangomagdalena.com/dancing_tango_on_tango.html, written October 2007.
109 See also the overview of contemporary tango formations—admittedly from ten years ago—by Bolasell (2011, 61–70). The only orchestras Bolasell mentions that focus on danceable music are Sexteto Milonguero and Misteriosa Buenos Aires.
110 *Es ist schwer, für Tänzer zu spielen oder tanzbar zu spielen! Das ist für normale, klassisch ausgebildete Musiker hier aus Europe eine Herausforderung, die sind das einfach nicht gewohnt. Die wollen das auch nicht, das sträubt sich in denen—die wollen ausmusizieren, klassisch spielen. Das ist leider beim tango tanzen eher hinderlich.*

111 *Los bailarines prefieren piezas de forma sencilla pero con buenos efectos en la melodía y en las variaciones, necesitan crear climas y dejarse llevar por una melodía que no sea demasiado sorpresiva.*

112 *die Tanzmusik der época de oro, das ist Tanzmusik, Unterhaltungsmusik im besten Sinn, das ist gut geschriebene Musik.*

113 *Du hast ja im Konzert eine bestimmte Spannung, Fokus, und Konzentration dadurch, dass du da nur die Musik präsentierst und der Zuhörende Teil dasitzt und der Fokus komplett auf dem ist das da musikalisch passiert. Der traditionelle Tango ist anders, da gibt es eine Interaktion. Da ist ein anderes Miteinander, deine Musik wird in Bewegung umgesetzt. Ich würde keines von beidem nur machen wollen.*

114 *Ich persönlich mag auch die lockerere Atmosphäre auf einer milonga. Ich mag dieses Gemurmel und Fußschleifen und Gläserklirren, und relativ wenig Etikette zu haben. . . . Und wenn man dann noch ein gutes Paar beim Tanzen beobachten kann—man macht die Musik, ich spiele, und sehe wie ein Paar das nutzt um schön drauf zu tanzen—das ist ein besonderes Gefühl.*

115 *Ich hab'in den 1990ern angefangen in Berlin, hab mich für klassischen tango interessiert. Und der Prozess zu lernen—wie spielen die eigentlich, und was ist daran tanzbar, . . . wann ist es gut tanzbar, das ist ja auch ein Prozess, den wir Musiker haben. Und das ist ein Prozess, der lange dauert! Hören und Noten haben, und sich selber hören, dauert lange. Und zumindest wir hatten keinen Lehrer—aber jetzt kann ich das zumindest in den Workshops vermitteln, andere natürlich auch.*

116 *Je tiefer man in die Materie eintaucht, und je tiefer man sich mit dem beschäftigt was es alles an Aufnahmen und Arrangements schon gegeben hat, . . . desto schwieriger finde ich es tatsächlich auch [Neues zu komponieren]. Weil man dann irgendwann auch so ein Gefühl bekommt, dass es sehr schwer ist da neue Wege auszuloten, ohne dass es dann kling „wie"– also man muss jetzt nicht Piazzolla neu komponieren, das hat Piazzolla in ausreichendem Maße getan! Und da finde ich es eher interessant was es für Interpretationen gibt, für Musiker, und wie die Sachen neu spielen, wieder spielen und lebendig halten . . .—musikalisch spannend, hat Hand und Fuß und ist sehr virtuos.*

117 *Leidenschaft, das zu spielen, . . . sich darin zu verlieren.*

118 I have seen several such approaches by different tango music teachers at workshops. The incorporated didactic elements ranged from just having the participants step in *marcato in dos* and *marcato in cuatro* to a recorded piece, to obligatory introductory tango dance sessions lasting several hours.

119 *Und was auch sehr gut funktioniert für Tänzer, wenn nicht nur das einzelne Stück, sondern du die Sets so ein bisschen abstimmst wie es beim DJ auch ist, du so in einer tanda spielst, Stücke die aufeinander Bezug haben, um so einen Fluss reinzubringen. Da würde ich denken, dass tatsächlich auch die Livemusik von den DJs und der Tanzszene Feedback geholt und das übernommen hat. . . . Cortinas haben wir auch schon gespielt, ich finde das geht weniger gut auf als Konzept, aber in tandas zu spielen das gibt es auch sicher schon seit 15 Jahren.*

120 *Ich glaube tatsächlich, der Schlüssel liegt in mehr Livemusik [auf milongas], und . . . dass DJs auch neuere Musik spielen. Das können ja die gleichen Stücke sein, das können ja sogar die gleichen Versionen sein! Man könnte ja überlegen, spiele ich jetzt das Original, oder spiele ich als DJ jetzt zum Beispiel die Version von Cuarteto Rotterdam. Und dass man so die Leute auch dran gewöhnt, neue, unbekanntere Versionen zu hören, obwohl es das gleiche Stück ist. Und sich vielleicht auch mal zu trauen, eine tanda mit was Leute noch nie gehört haben.*

121 *Ich würde niemandem empfehlen, aus wirtschaftlichen Erwägungen den Beruf des Tangomusikers zu ergreifen—noch weniger, sich da auf ein milonga oder Festival Programm zu stürzen. . . . Ich will nicht sagen, dass man bei Festivals nicht bezahlt wird, aber es ist nicht zu vergleichen mit klassischem Konzertprogramm. . . . Man kann jetzt auch nicht losgehen und sagen: "Pass mal auf, ich brauch jetzt das doppelte an Gage, lieber Veranstalter, weil sonst kann ich hier davon nicht leben" dann sagt der Veranstalter: "würde ich dir wahnsinnig gerne zahlen, aber ich kann nicht den doppelten Eintritt nehmen, sonst kommen die Leute nicht mehr".*

122 *Die Wertschätzung, dass da zehn Musiker ein Live-Erlebnis mit orquesta típica liefern, [ist] nicht vorhanden. In die Richtung wünsche ich mir mehr Wertschätzung und Verständnis, was es heißt für Musiker davon leben zu können. Dass Veranstalter auch die Möglichkeit haben die Preise entsprechend hoch anzusetzen. . . . Ich wünsche mir, dass da ein Umdenken stattfindet, dass es schon das Spezielles, was Besonderes, Tolles, ist, auf Livemusik zu tanzen, und [die Tanzenden] sich dem auch hinzugeben.*

123 *Die Entwicklung der Marathons, das nehme ich so ein bisschen so wahr, als wenn . . . eine Gruppe von Tänzern versucht, für sich die idealen Bedingungen zu schaffen, . . . Und da möchte ich vielleicht gar nicht, dass da . . . viel Musik aufgelegt wird, die ich nicht so kenne oder auf die ich mich einstellen müsste, oder Unerwartetes passieren könnte. Als Livemusiker ist man da komplett raus. Das ist eine andere Welt—offen gestanden gefällt mir das auch nicht so sehr.*

124 *Das lustige ist ja, gerade diese Marathon Tänzer sind ja meistens die, die sich als besonders traditionell empfinden. Aber früher, da gabs halt nur live, oder es gab halt nix! Und dieser eine Aspekt des ultratraditionellen tangos wird halt leider außer Acht gelassen. Da würde ich mir wünschen, dass es wieder ein bisschen mehr wäre wie früher, da gab es halt tango Festivals, da wurde eine Band eingeladen, da wurde getanzt, und nicht Marathon mit 8 DJs, aber keine Livemusik.*

125 *Y para nosotros los músicos el tango bailable es saber transmitir un mensaje que debe ser bien recepcionado por los bailarines y así en conjunto hablar el mismo lenguaje.*

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4 Tango Dance and Its Musicality

In theory, *tango argentino* is easy to dance; it is only steps, pivots, and the right body position. There is no need to learn complicated figures, lifts, sequences, or jumps. But often, the simplest things are the most complicated to perfect. Learning to dance tango is a never-ending endeavor, and many tango dancers who have danced for more than 10 or 20 years feel that they have only started to explore all the movement options tango contains. The reason for this complexity is twofold. First, the key element in tango is improvisation to music. The possibilities for interpreting the musical structures and combining movements in tango movement repertoire are endless; no two dances to one piece of music will ever be the same. Second, *tango argentino* is a couple dance. Dancing to music in a joint improvisation is incredibly challenging and differs depending on one's partner. Regardless of their role in the dance, that is, leader or follower, each dancer brings their own ideas, abilities, and limitations to the dance. This increases the challenge of interpreting the music in an embodied way. Getting "in tune" with the partner and the music is the goal of most tango dancers in current translocal tango practice.[1]

To understand how musical tango dancing works, it is necessary to first examine tango dance movements. An exploration of the movement basics provides an understanding of the limitations and options of choreomusical relations in tango. To this end, this chapter takes a closer look at movement structures of tango dancing,[2] with a focus on the basic elements walking and pivoting. In addition, I examine further principles that define tango dancing beyond walking and pivoting movements. Here I cover embellishing movements, the function of pauses as part of the dance, and the relation of all movements to the floor. I briefly describe the connection and communication as well as the lead–follow concept in the relation of two dancers in a couple. Finally, I examine the issue of improvisation, in particular, the embodied interpretation of music in an improvisatory way.

Because my analysis incorporates observations from different tango dance styles, I provide a short explanation of the differences between the

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prominent tango dance styles *milonguero*, *salón*, and *neotango* together with a brief biography of the tango dance couples I worked with.

These descriptions serve as the basis for the next part of the chapter, which includes detailed examples of tango dance movement analysis, again focusing on walking (forward steps and backward steps) and pivoting (the forward *ocho* and the backward *ocho* step-pivot combinations). The examination here is based on motion capture (mocap) technique that provides in-depth insights into movement based on quantitative data analysis. I decided to keep this section separate from the descriptive part on movement repertoire and dance principles for two reasons. First, it is necessary to get a wholesome picture of tango dancing—packaged in one introductory block—to understand the detailed data analysis that follows. Second, it seems more plausible to keep the mocap section on steps and *ochos* in one part, because this way, necessary explanations to understand the mocap approach and procedure together with the concrete results can be presented in a coherent way. The last part of this chapter focuses on the musicality in tango dancing. I first present a mocap study in which I explored the relation between step and beat in tango. Following is a section in which I use a description of how dancers learn to be a musical dancer as a way to explore details about the meaning of musicality in tango, as well as the processes dancers go through while acquiring such dancing abilities. The last part of this chapter is an inventory of tango movements that are used commonly to visually interpret musical features of tango. I list those features and relate them to the respective structural, rhythmic, and melodic elements.

Basic Movement Repertoire

Posture

The basic tango posture of the individual dancer is that which is generally referred to as "good posture" or "standing upright". The shoulders should be relaxed, the spine supported by the core muscles in a straight, upright position. The hips and shoulders are aligned.[3] The knees are not locked and must be relaxed and, at times, slightly bent. The weight is on the balls of the feet, but the heels stay in contact with the floor. The weight is rarely distributed between both legs; dancers mostly stand on one leg to permit unambiguous signals to the partner and a quick response to changes in movement direction. The free leg stays close to the supporting standing leg, both ball and heel having contact to the floor. The free leg is slightly more bent at the hip and knee joints, the ankles of both legs kept closely together (see Figure 4.1).

Although not part of the body itself, the shoes of tango dancers also influence their posture. Tango shoes for female dancers are, by convention,

Figure 4.1 Basic position with one free leg, presented by Yanina Quiñones.
Source: Photographs by Neri Píliu.

high heels (stilettos), while male dancers dance in flat shoes or those with a very slight, broad heel.[4] In current practice, female dancers have also adopted dancing in flat dance shoes (termed "tango flats"), and male dancers may occasionally wear high heels, yet the gendered convention is still that female dancers wear high heels. High heels not only transfer more weight, and thus pressure, onto the balls of the feet but also affect the position of the hips. In general, the hips in the basic tango position have neither an obvious lateral tilt nor an anterior tilt, although some dancers—in particular followers—tend to tilt their hips to the posterior, which allows longer backward steps and slightly more room for leg movements. Posterior tilting is supported by the wearing of high heels. The downside of this posture is that the spine is bent into a hollow back, which can cause pain in the lower back if this posture is not properly supported by muscles around the lower spine.

In the last decade, professional tango dancers have started to turn out their legs, presumably inspired by ballet or standardized Latin dance. A roughly 45-degree angle between the feet is kept while standing, walking, and turning.

An important term and concept that tango dancers use is the "axis". Tango dancers are supposed to be aware and in control of their own axis, which is a conceptualized vertical line through the core of the body from head to toe. Standing in one's axis means that the dancer is standing stable in balance on the floor, without the need for any additional support and independent from the partner. But this concept incorporates even more than a correct upright position and balance. It also allows better intrabody and interbody communication. Kimmel and Preuschl (2016, 213) define being in axis as "good form (uprightness), action-readiness (*metastable* balance), receptiveness to incoming information and intrabody information flow (inner connection), and muscle efficiency (core activation)".

If two dancers start dancing together, they join their individual positions into one joint couple position. How exactly the connection between the two is established depends on the individual body shape and height of a dancer, which of course includes the physical differences between the two dancers. A very tall leader connects to a small follower differently than two dancers who are the same height; two slender dancers embrace each other differently than two corpulent ones.

Two tango dancers always stand face-to-face and hold each other in an asymmetrical embrace. The left arm of the follower is placed over the right arm of the leader, which allows the leader to have better contact to the follower's back. The way the right hand of the follower and the left hand of the leader connect greatly varies. Less style-related than individual, it also depends on the teacher as well as physical conditions. This asymmetry in the embrace has led to the terminology that one side of the couple is "open" (where the hands are held) and the other "closed" (where the arms have contact). Any description more detailed than this would entail a discussion of differences in dancing styles that will be addressed later.

Walking

Walking forward and backward with the occasional side step is the basic element of tango dancing, something that all tango styles have in common.[5] Apart from the right posture, the focus in any teaching and learning context is primarily on proper walking (Krüger 2012, 193). The reason for this is threefold: progression on the dance floor, partner communication, and improvisation. First, tango couples progress on the dance floor in a counterclockwise direction. This way of dancing tango developed during

the golden age of tango and became re-established in the 1990s.[6] But the progression on the dance floor is not a continuous movement:

> Walking the tango circulating continuously on a crowded dance floor was a complicated task because the *milongueros* . . . did not advance keeping equivalent and constant distances from each other. Instead, they designed winding routes, adapting to the changes in the rhythm of the couples that preceded them, their advances and retreats, their "feints" and surprise pauses.[7]
>
> (Carozzi 2015, 105)

For dancers to be able to dance to the music on a dance floor shared with many other couples and avoid collisions, they need to have complete control over their footwork, so they can change direction and stop a movement at any time without interrupting the flow of the dance. The second reason that proper step execution is required is walking as a couple. The leader must combine leading impulses with movements that move the couple in space in possibly any direction. The leading impulses need to be clear, but if walking is not executed clearly as well by both leader and follower, the communication between the couple is disrupted. Carozzi mentions how elderly *milongueros* complained about young female tango dancers who had started to learn in the 1990s, trained by stage dancers to focus on complicated figures and movement sequences but lacking the knowledge on how to "walk it well" (*caminarlo bien*) on the social dance floor (Carozzi 2015, 104). In other words, followers and leaders both need good walking technique to keep the connection to their partners. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, tango is an improvised dance. For the flexibility to react to musical impulses and bring creativity into the dance, both partners need to master the movement basics upon which all possible ad hoc created step sequences are built.[8]

Regardless of the size or direction, any step should ideally keep vertical movement to a minimum. The body movement from one place to another should have a gliding quality, with the dancer staying at the same height throughout the step sequence. Dancers achieve this by not locking the knees, keeping them slightly bent and flexible, and not bending them more than necessary to counteract up–down movements at the transition between leg extension and transfer of weight. The hips also play an active role in counteracting up–down movements through slight lateral pelvic tilting, which I will show in detail in the mocap exploration section.

Per definition, and as practiced in teaching contexts, a tango step starts with closed legs (see Figure 4.3).[9] The weight is on one leg, while the other leg is free but touching the floor with the ball of the foot. The inner ankles or insides of the heels are close to each other. The movement starts as one leg is extended to the front in a sliding movement, with the foot staying

close to the floor but not necessarily in contact with it. When the full extension is reached, the ball of the foot is lifted and the heel is brought down, at which point the transfer of weight starts. As soon as the weight rests on the front leg, the free back leg is pulled to the front, again close to the floor, in a sliding movement. If the foot has contact with the floor, it is with the ball of the foot or the outside of the big toe. The step ends when the free leg is closest to the standing leg. Many tango teachers explain a step by deconstructing it into three phases: the projection (extension of the leg), the transfer of weight, and the closing. Of course, in tango dancing practice, one step follows the next, and the instance in which the legs are closest together (beginning and end of a step) is only a transitional moment in which one step morphs into the next. The free leg moves continuously from the back extension to the front extension, from one transfer of weight to the next, while the supporting leg bears the weight in the meantime.

In backward steps, the starting position is the same as that of forward steps. The free leg is extended to the back as far as possible, the standing leg slightly bent. If the foot has contact with the floor, it is the tip or the side of the big toe. It is important that the weight of the supporting leg remains on the ball of the foot while the back leg is extended. When the full extension has been reached, the weight is transferred to the back leg until the front leg is free of weight. At this point, the front leg is pulled toward the back leg, close to the floor. If the free foot has contact with the floor, it is via the ball of the foot. The step ends with the free leg still without any weight on it and close to the standing leg, with the inner ankles or insides of the heels of both legs close to each other.

In both forward steps and backward steps, the paths of both legs on the floor are parallel. Contrary to regular walking, where the feet stay on two parallel lines, there is a tendency for both lines to converge. In gait analysis, this would be expressed in terms of width of walking base (the span between the two lines of walking; see Levine et al. 2012, 34). The walking base in tango is smaller than in regular walking because the two lines from both foot trajectories forge almost into one line.[10] To achieve that, dancers bring the free leg in front of the standing leg when starting to extend the leg to the front, keeping the balls of the feet turned out slightly. In the transition from one forward step to the next, the free foot draws a curve around the standing foot (see Figure 4.2).

The side step follows the same basic pattern. The free leg reaches to the side, with the ball of the foot or the outside of the big toe leading the movement—on the floor or slightly above it—until the leg is fully extended. If the free foot contacts the floor only with the inner side of the ball of the foot or big toe, the contact is shifted from the inside to the outside of the sole until the whole ball of the foot touches the floor while the weight is transferred. When the free leg has taken all the weight and become the standing

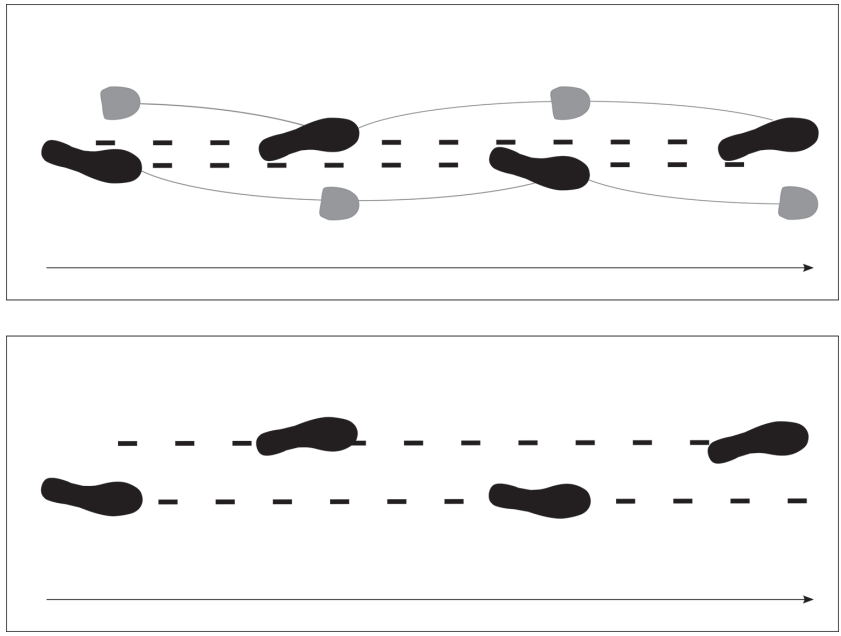

Figure 4.2 The floor paths of tango walking (top), where the two lines converge, in comparison with regular walking with two wider lines of trajectory (bottom).

Figure 4.3 A forward tango step presented by Yanina Quiñones.
Source: Photographs by Neri Píliu.

leg—with the weight remaining on the ball of the foot but the heel close to the floor or touching the floor slightly—the newly free leg is pulled in. If the free foot has contact with the floor, it is via the ball of the foot or the outside of the big toe. As in all other steps, the movement ends when the feet are closest together.

The reason for defining the start and the end of a step in a closed position is connected to the improvisatory character of tango. Dancers need to have the flexibility to progress into any follow-up direction or turn after finishing a step. In addition to always bringing their legs together after each step, dancers in the follower's role must make sure they keep their entire weight on one leg; this prevents miscommunication between the couple and increases the reaction speed.

Pivoting

Many authors include definitions and descriptions of tango walking technique in their publications on tango, but they do not include any details or explanations of turning or pivoting technique (with a few notable exceptions, like Denniston 2007, 132–144; Kimmel and Preuschl 2016). This supports the claim that walking is considered to be the most important aspect of tango dancing. In current tango teaching practice, however, pivoting technique is a topic of great interest in elementary to advanced classes.

In accordance with walking aesthetics, tango dancers strive to have a gliding quality in their turning movements. While pivoting, a dancer aims to stay on the same horizontal level, keeping up and down movements to a minimum. Dancers often pivot with their knees slightly bent. The heel always stays close to the floor, although all the weight is on the ball of the pivoting foot. Most turns are a maximum of 180 degrees, which is the widest angle a dancer can achieve without opening up the embrace.[11] Because tango pivots are short and relatively slow, there is no need for an additional turning technique as, for instance, in ballet, where the head is kept in place as long as possible and, at the last moment, turns more quickly than the rest of the body to prevent the dancer from getting dizzy while turning and to maintain orientation in the room. If a tango dancer pivots, the goal is to keep the axis stable and centered. This is achieved by activating the core muscles and turning with the weight (center of mass) directly over the leg on which the dancer rotates.

The central concept for initiating pivots in tango is a dissociation (*disociación*) in the torso, allowing "the torso and the hips to be oriented in different directions" (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 29). Dissociation is achieved by turning the shoulder line to one side while the hips remain pointed forward (see Figure 4.4). The resulting torsion in the torso is most strongly felt in the supporting muscles around the spine and the outer back muscles (*musculus latissimus dorsi* and *musculus trapezius*), which are the most active in achieving the torsion and aided by a contraction of the external oblique muscle (*musculus obliquus externus abdominis*). If the hip line is brought closer to the shoulder line by pivoting on one foot in the direction of the latter, the torsion is released. Thus, the actual turning is felt to

Figure 4.4 Dissociated hip line from shoulder line demonstrated by Yanina Quiñones: the upper body has been turned to the left, while the legs up to the hips are pointed forward.

Source: Photograph by Neri Píliu.

be a relaxation of the dissociation, which Kimmel and Preuschl also call "release technique" (2016, 221).[12] In most instances, the dissociation is set up as described, yet it can also be achieved in the reverse order. In this

case, a rotation is initiated by the muscles in the supporting leg starting a pivot, which causes the hip line to rotate to the side, while the shoulder line is actively kept in place by a simultaneous countermovement. While this movement is a rotation, it mainly serves as a preparation for the turning movement that follows. In any case, relieving the muscle tension of the dissociation triggers the turn.

The Giro*—A Standard Combination of a Step and a Pivot by a Couple*

Although the bases for tango dancing are steps and pivots, several combinations thereof have made it into the regular repertoire and been given names. Benzecry Sabá, for instance, has collected names of dance elements in a glossary of tango dance terms (2010). To show how basic movements can be combined into sequences, I present the *giro* (turn), a common movement sequence that combines steps and pivots into a joint movement by the couple.

In a *giro*, both partners keep their own axis. There are two options for the center of the turning action by the couple. Most commonly, one partner is considered the central turning axis for both dancers. For instance, the partner whose axis is the center of the turning movement stays in one spot and pivots, while the other partner steps or shifts their weight around the first partner. The common term for this is *calesita* (carousel, merry-go-round). While the central turning axis can be either that of the leader or of the follower, in practice, it is mostly the follower who is at the center. The second turning option is based on a shared axis which is conceptualized as being located between the two dancers. In other words, the partners turn around an imaginary vertical axis between them while keeping the embrace and facing each other continuously (see Figure 4.5). This is achieved by interspersing step sequences with pivoting movements by both partners.

Figure 4.5 Yanina Quiñones and Neri Píliu from above, with three axis options in a *giro* (from left to right: follower, center, leader).

Source: Photographs taken by Yanina Quiñones and Neri Píliu. Graphic added by Kendra Stepputat.

Figure 4.6 The steps in a *giro*: forward step (pivot on left foot), side step (pivot on the right foot), backward step (pivot on the left foot), side step, as presented by Wolfgang Kienreich and Kendra Stepputat.

Source: Photographs by Oskar Stepputat and Anton Stepputat.

A step sequence used for *giros* is a combination of four steps that are walked in a square around the partner or that one partner walks around the other while the other pivots. Note that if both partners execute the steps at the same time, they do not mirror each other's movements but do the same step with the same leg on the same side. Because they are facing each other, this enables them to walk around each other. The dancers start by dissociating the lower body into the direction they want to do their first step, keeping their upper bodies aligned. The first step is usually a forward step in the direction of the turn, followed by a pivot of around 90 degrees, a side step, another pivot of 90 degrees, into a backward step, and then ending with a side step (see Figure 4.5). The two pivots between the steps are necessary to carry out all steps in the same trajectory around the partner. While the legs carry out the step sequence, the upper bodies stay stable in relation to each other as the partners face each other. To achieve this, a dissociation is created with the first forward step and released in the pivot before the second step, and an inversed dissociation (active pivoting and keeping the torso stable) is created by the second pivot, the tension held during the backward step and released in the transition to the final side step. If the follower walks this sequence around the leader, the figure is called a *molinete*. If the leader walks around the follower, it is one type of *calesita*.

All *giro* options combine steps (front-side-back) with pivots into a joint turning movement. Although the sequence has a name and is often taught and learned as a "figure", it is actually just a combination of the basic movement repertoire walking and pivoting.

Dance Principles

Adornments

Adornos (adornments, embellishments) are steps that are not needed for progressing in space and not essential for a joint movement. Both partners

can adorn their basic movement repertoire with additional movements that "spice up" the dance. The aim of adding *adornos* is twofold: to add an individual, personal expression to the dance, and to interpret musical cues. Although some teachers might teach otherwise, I see adornments as movements that are not led by the leader but originate from the individual idea of playing with movement progression or as a means for embodied interpreting of the music. Benzecry Sabá defines *adorno* as "charming movement performed by either dancer, with one or both feet, during a pause or while moving. Need not be led by the man" (2010, 17). In theory, both dancers can add *adornos* at any time. Yet because *adornos* are not part of the lead–follow communication, executing such a movement at a random time may disrupt the joint flow of movements and irritate the partner (see Carozzi 2015, 260–261). In fact, an *adorno* should only be carried out in a way that does not interfere with the lead–follow principle. Therefore, it is just as important to learn *when* to do an *adorno* as it is to learn *how* to do one. For the leader, this includes being sensitive to the follower's "adornment needs" and giving enough space and time that the follower can decide to use—or not to use—for embellishments. The leader also must be careful when inserting *adornos* into the dance not to communicate the movement to the follower but exclude it form the lead–follow communication. The variety of *adornos* is vast, and although categorizations of improvisational basics are artificial, different types of *adornos* can be grouped together. One option to adorn a simple step is by taking three small steps instead of one regular-timed step. It is important to take an odd number of steps, because an even number causes the weight to shift onto the other foot, confusing the partner and causing a temporal asynchrony. Another option is to insert additional taps on the floor by one foot between steps. The many options for such taps include tapping with the heel or with the ball of the foot, next to the standing leg or with the leg extended, to the front, side, back, or crossing over the standing leg, and all possible combinations thereof. Drawing patterns on the floor with the free leg is a further *adorno* possibility; this is sometimes called a *lápiz* (pencil). These are mostly circular patterns, for instance, full circles next to the leg—also in combination with a pivot—or half circles around the standing leg, to the front or back, crossing over, or changing directions. Finally, simple steps or turns may be adorned by lifting the free leg between steps, either by bending the knee or lifting the thigh of the free leg.

In addition to the movement itself, the quality of *adorno* movements has a broad range and can be adapted to the musical cues the dancer wants to interpret.[13] Movements are quick or slow, accentuated or smooth, abrupt or gliding, far-reaching or condensed, and anything in between. The quality depends on the character of the music as well as the time at the dancer's disposal within the flow of the joint improvisation and the available space.

Stay Parallel to and on the Floor

At times, a movement repertoire can be better understood by exploring its boundaries. There are thousands of ways to move in dancing that are outside of tango repertoire, and it would be nonsensical to attempt to describe them all. However, several major movement principles can be pinpointed that are not part of socially danced tango movements to understand what lies within the accepted movement repertoire. One such movement outside of tango boundaries is hopping or jumping. While walking, pivoting, and turning, dancers always have one foot on the ground.[14] There is also no bouncing within a step—what Norwegian dance ethnologist Bakka has called "*svikt*" (2007, 108)—from neither the knees nor the ankles. Through the omission of such movements, steps and turns have a constant gliding quality devoid of any significant and impulsive up-and-down motion. This also aids in keeping the connection to the partner, which becomes more difficult to achieve as the number of axes of movement increases—in this case, the vertical axis. This is particularly true when the movements have strong impulses, as jumps tend to have. Finally, the pelvis is stable; there are no significant intentional movements to the side, front, or back, which some tango teachers emphasize by claiming there are "no hip movements in tango". This is not entirely true, as the hips do move in support of the steps, with pelvic tilting, as will be shown. The statement about "no hips" is more directed toward the avoiding of deliberate and obvious hip movements, such as those expected in salsa.[15]

Other elements are excluded from social tango dancing but belong to the staged tango movement repertoire (called *escenario* or *fantasía*; see Carozzi 2015, 114). Social dancers may include some of these elements in presentations and in their regular dancing if there is sufficient space on the dance floor. The inclusion or exclusion of these elements in social tango is the subject of continued debate, with representatives of different tango styles being more or less in favor of their inclusion. The most prominent movement elements that are excluded are acrobatic lifts, which are an important, visually impressive element in show tango but too space-consuming and thereby incompatible with the counterclockwise progression of couples dancing close to each other on a social dance floor. Similarly—as strange as it may sound in this generalization—movements that bring the head, torso, or knees down to the floor may be a show element but do not work on a crowded dance floor. Ballet poses such as the splits do not occur at a social tango event, nor do extreme back and front bends. Such show elements are visually impressive for staged performances but are not well suited to social dance floor situations, in which dance couples share a common, limited space. In general, tango dancers strive to stay in their vertical axis and move in a stable, horizontal plane.

Pauses

Several writers have asserted that the main innovation introduced into European-derived salon couple dancing through tango is the pause (e.g., Falcoff 2014, 37). A tango couple does not have to be in constant motion. Breaks in the movement patterns are not only "allowed"; they are common and even characteristic of tango. Abrupt stops in the music and the dance (*cortes* and *quebradas*) that were part of the early tango movement repertoire—as explained in more detail in the historical overview chapter—can be considered a predecessor of the way movement pauses are integrated into contemporary tango dancing. A pause (*pausa*) can be differentiated from a *corte* because "the *pausa* is preceded by a gradual slowing down" (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 52). Pauses are not breaks. They do not necessarily interrupt the flow, for dance couples may move smoothly into a pause and out of it. Furthermore, the primary aim of a *pausa* is not to remain in a special position or extroverted pose, as in a *quebrada*. Instead, the pause is an important element in the interpretation of the music, and on a pragmatic level, it allows the partners to readjust the connection between them: "Pauses are useful for feeling the music, reincorporating the rhythm, improving the position and rearranging the embrace" (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 52). The most common moment for a pause is probably at the beginning of a piece. Although one might object that if there is no movement before it, it is not a pause, I would argue that a dance can begin with a pause. This is the time when the two dancers find their embrace, listen to the music, adjust their positions, and wait for the right moment to start moving: either a cue in the music, for instance, the beginning of a phrase, or a good moment from the perspective of the joint movement, when both bodies "feel ready" to move jointly. Pauses may also be imposed by a lack of space: if a couple has no space in which to move because the dance floor is crowded, pauses provide an opportunity to wait until a space opens. All in all, a pause as part of the movement repertoire is an important element in improvisation. It offers a further option to relate to the music by interpreting calm moments in the music—for instance, long notes—through a pause in the movement.

Most importantly, a pause in tango is not only the absence of movement, a "non-motion", or just a moment between two movements. Instead, the pause is a suspension, a moment of tension without movement. An appropriate metaphor is a rubber band that has been pulled out of its relaxed state. Even if it is kept still so it does not move, the tension remains and the stored energy can be released into movement at any time.[16] This concept of "held tension", which means that the dancers keep their muscles active and are prepared for the next movement, is what Kimmel and Preuschl call "action-readiness" (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 213). Tango is not

the only dance form that uses the pause as a part of the movement repertoire and concept. Another example is Judy Van Zile's study of the traditional Korean dance concept of *chŏng-jung-dong*, which she translates as "motion-in-stillness", which "suggests a dynamic of subtle motion that occurs within what might initially *appear* to be stillness but what is, in fact, a single continuing action", or "a pause that is not a stop, but rather a preparation for what follows" (Van Zile 2018, 308). Both descriptions of the concept apply very well to the use of pauses in tango dancing.

Many staged dance forms make active use of suspension with little or no movement. Choreographers of Euro-American staged performances incorporate pauses into their works to create tension or emphasize prior or subsequent movements. The pause is used to enhance a primarily aesthetic and visual effect. I would argue that the use of the pause in tango is different; it is not used for an aesthetic effect or enhancement of a visual impression but primarily for an internal effect. It is an enhancement, but more in an affective way, as part of the communication between the dancers in the couple. For instance, a pause at an intense moment in the music—after a strong crescendo, a moment of strongly articulated unison playing in the orchestra, reaching a peak in a melodic phrase, etc.—can enhance the interpersonal connection or the relation to the music because in that moment, both dancers might listen with more focus because movement is absent. Torp describes these moments as filled with "nearly invisible, emotionally-driven movements" (Torp 2014, 241). No matter if pauses are used for visual "effect" or physical "affect", they are not merely an absence of movement but an important part of the dance.

Connection and Communication

Denniston states that "the essence of good technique is to keep the two hearts[17] perfectly together at all times throughout the dance, and that the purpose of this is to give the most satisfying dance to both partners, both emotionally and creatively" (Denniston 2007, 105). In this statement, she puts the bodily connection into the center of all tango movement technique. Likewise, Cara cites connection (*conexión*) as one of the most important terms tango dancers in Buenos Aires associate with socially danced tango (Cara 2009, 441). Falcoff uses the terms *pareja unida* (united couple) and *danza de enlace* (linked dance) as key terms for tango (Falcoff 2014, 37). Statements like these—and hundreds more, particularly in tango blogs, social media tango groups, or advertisements for tango dance lessons—show how important the physical connection and communication between dancers is considered to be in contemporary tango practice. To many, the ultimate aim of social tango dance is to connect perfectly and without any tension to the fellow dancer, regardless of the danced style (see Falcoff

2014, 38).[18] This includes notions such as dancing not "with" but "for" the partner—and definitely not making the partner dance for oneself—to achieve ultimate pleasure in the dance (Denniston 2007, 23).

The question is how this intimate connection is achieved and maintained in the joint improvisation.[19] Dancers need to have a constant stream of communication, which stays entirely on a physical level. This communication happens on such a small yet intense scale that it might seem like magic—or at least very mysterious. Falcoff states that in tango "two bodies [are] linked in more or less proximity, in attitudes more introspective than sensual, and which understand each other through keys difficult to unravel if those who observe them are uninitiated"[20] (Falcoff 2014, 36). I would like to add that not only those unfamiliar with tango dancing have difficulties understanding how "the keys" to communication work. Even if tango dancers have the physical knowledge, they have difficulty explaining and pinpointing how the connection and communication work. This applies to beginners just as much as advanced dancers; being able to carry out the communication does not necessarily mean one "understands" it, let alone is able to explain it except with metaphors.

How dancers communicate with their partners differs depending on whether they use a close embrace or an open embrace (see following text), yet all styles have in common that there is no verbal communication; all codes are given physically. Kimmel calls the phenomenon of physical communication between two individuals in tango a "bodily intersubjectivity" (Kimmel 2012, 77). In his 2016 publication with Preuschl, coordination patterns based on "interwoven individual micro-actions" between two tango dancers are explored as the foundation of an intersubjective joint improvisation (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 210). The most important basis for the interbody communication in micro-actions is that the two dancers aim to keep their sternums (breastbones) in alignment, which the authors call the "communication center" (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 226). The sternums do not have to have contact; the alignment can span some distance (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 217–218). In other words, the two dancers adjust their individual movements to keep this position relative to the other, which often requires micro-adjustments and countermovements that are not part of the musical interpretation, lead–follow principles, step sequences, or adornments. This stability in the sternum alignment is another cause for the turning technique described before: if the dancers turn around a central axis while doing back, side, and forward steps, all rotation must take place in the lower part of the body if the chests are to stay in line with each other. This can be achieved with the dissociation technique.[21]

In tango communication technique as it is currently practiced, movement impulses are transferred by movements of the torso either actively through dissociation or passively by stepping away from or around the

partner. What might also be called "body lead" is the goal, whereas "arm lead" is frowned upon.[22] Partners are expected to neither push nor pull the other with arm or hand movements. Instead, the arms should stay in a stable position relative to the torso without becoming stiff or blocked; the more open the embrace, and thus the greater the span between the two sternums, the more relevant this becomes.

Following Kimmel and Preuschl in their analysis, it is important to note that a complex movement technique is needed to maintain the connection to the partner. This technique is learned over a long time span and includes bodily listening to physical signals from the partner and physical interpretation of these signals in a constantly flowing loop.

In addition, the partner's signals need to be interpreted by individual movements that belong to the tango movement repertoire and are the "visible" results of the connection and communication. Movements are coded in tango, and to process the signals of this code, all tango dancers need to learn the code as if it were a physical language. Bodily signals that are received must be translated into reactions, and the right signals must be clearly given to trigger "correct" responses. The first challenge is to train the body to be receptive to very small movements and perceive them clearly. The next step is to train responses to such a degree that they are no longer thought about and have become an instant, autonomous, physical reaction. Such a trained response starts to feel like a "natural" reaction to a dancer once it has been integrated into the individual *signal reception–interpretation–movement execution* process. One such example is the following: a movement forward led by the sternum, causing a shifting of the center of mass to the front with a clear impulse at the beginning of the movement, possibly combined with a very small upward ("breathing") motion before the movement is initiated. This movement builds up pressure onto the chest of the partner and signals "move to the back". The reaction of a person not trained in tango might be to bend backward with the upper body, to mirror the movement and compensate the pressure. However, "tango signal processing" dictates another reaction: reciprocating the pressure in the chest and, instead of bending back, stretching out one leg to the back to prepare for a backward step, which in tango teaching terms is often called "to project the step". This learned and trained reaction to the signal replaces all other possible reactions and becomes the intuitive reaction of the tango dancer. It is true that this transfer into movement without thinking is much more important for the follower than the leader. The leader needs to practice fewer automated responses but requires a heightened sensitivity to the movements of the follower. The partner's position and movement must trigger instant physical knowledge of possibilities for how and when to proceed in the dancing.

Taking the earlier examples into consideration, it is obvious that there is nothing metaphysical about the communication between the couple in tango. Once the bodily language of tango—its code and signals—is understood and mastered, the body reacts intuitively. It requires a great amount of training to control the micromovements that keep the connection to the partner and reprogram the body with new intuitive reactions. Finally, to master the bodily language of tango, it is important to learn to physically converse with a wide variety of dance partners.

Lead and Follow Dialogues

"The social rules of almost any partner dance space will favor the lead/follow system in the sense that the leader can always assume they have the right to override the follower's impulses, whether they choose to exert that privilege or not" (Kaminsky 2020, 7). As stated here rather drastically by Kaminsky, if two people dance together as a couple, the convention is that one of them is in a leading role while the other follows this lead. As simple and "normal" as this might seem, this system starts to ravel the closer one looks at it, starting with the terms for the two "functions".

Denniston conveys how dancers of the golden age explained to her that they prefer the terms "the man's role" and "the woman's role" to "leader" and "follower" in tango. These terms link the gender of a dancer to the danced role, which might seem limiting, but the practice of dancing tango in the golden age did not restrict men to leading and women to following. In practice situations, it was most common to learn to dance both roles. Yet in public *milonga* situations, the convention was that male dancers danced "the man's role", and female dancers "the woman's role". Those who prefer the terms "male" and "female" do not imply that these roles should be danced by someone of that gender—quite the contrary. I have heard people say that they prefer to dance "with a man" and don't care if said man is male or female. Falcoff accordingly states that "the modalities imposed today by gay and lesbian milongas have not altered the division of roles, regardless of who assumes which of them"[23] (Falcoff 2014, 38). This statement might be misleading in suggesting that dancing in a different gender role from one's own assigned gender is connected to sexual orientation, which is far from the truth.[24] In current tango practice, which has adopted liberal ideas of queerness as part of tango normality, "male" and "female" roles can be danced by anyone in any context.[25]

It is likely that the use of the English terms "leader" and "follower" came into *tango argentino* terminology via ballroom dancing conventions, where these terms are standard denominators for the two roles in a dance couple (see Denniston 2007, 22). At the latest, in the 1980s, when the second wave of tango hit a translocal market, English started to be

the common language in *tango argentino* teaching contexts. Today, these terms are the most widely used and accepted by many dancers as more fitting than "the man" and "the woman", because "leader" and "follower" are gender-neutral. However, many dancers are also opposed to these terms because they imply and convey a hierarchy in the dance that is neither intended nor felt. Renowned tango dancer and teacher Cacho Dante stated in 1998: "Thirty years ago . . . the woman was not just a follower, she was to whom the tango was dedicated".[26]

Alternative Spanish words for the roles in tango include *llevar* (take, wear, carry) for the male and *dejar llevado* (allow to be carried) or *acompañar* (to accompany) for the female part (Denniston 2007, 23). Pelinski (2000a) also uses the terms *el guía* (the guide) for the male and *la pareja* (the partner) for the female part; Merritt adds *marcar* (to mark, to show the way) and *responder* (to respond) as well as *proponer* (propose) and *disponer* (decide) (Merritt 2012, 89). Other English terms that, for instance, tango dancers Martin Maldonado and Maurizio Ghella use in English-language teaching contexts are "suggester" and "interpreter".

All these terms have their problems and disadvantages, and as Merritt correctly states, "translating the terminology of tango's partnership is not only a linguistic but a cultural endeavor" (Merritt 2012, 89).[27] In my research and in this book, I continue to use "leader" and "follower" despite finding the implied hierarchy to be misleading. Because the terms are the most widespread ones in translocal practice, this seems to be the best choice nevertheless.

If the main reason to oppose "leader" and "follower" is an implied hierarchy, the question arises as to what else defines the relation between the two roles. The most common description used to define the movement relation and communication between the two dancers in a couple is a conversation or a dialogue (see Merritt 2012, 89–90), which Cara terms a "conversational nature of the dance [which] requires give-and-take, an invitation to dance—and a response" (2009, 454). This dialogue is limited by a few additional rules and tasks assigned to one of the dance partners. What exactly these tasks are is an issue constantly debated by tango dancers and teachers. I do not claim to be neutral in this debate; my ideals and opinions have been shaped by teachers, dance partners, and endless discussions with fellow dancers over many years. I will attempt to do justice to several views on the topic, yet I will also convey my opinion on the subject, elaborating on the reasons that I favor certain options over others.

One indisputable task of the leader is to take responsibility for the use of space on the dance floor. The leader needs to keep the couple moving along the counterclockwise path and progressing without hindering any of the other couples in their forward movements. Accidents with nearby objects such as chairs and tables or with other couples on the dance floor should

also be avoided. This might seem simple, but the more crowded the dance floor, the more complicated this task is. Leaders able to navigate without harming their partners or other couples are usually in high demand.

The possibilities a leader has in terms of using the surrounding space are often the main reason for the choice of steps, directions, or turns. The follower depends on safe navigation by the leader and must support this navigation with appropriate physical responses or, as Kimmel and Preuschl phrase it, with "functionally complementary and synchronized actions" (2016, 211). Having researched this principle of leading or "initiating movement", Kimmel and Preuschl state that "the leader . . . function[s] as a dynamic anchor for the follower—after all, leaders minimally project ahead motor plans whereas followers respond in real-time" (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 226). In their study, they detected a difference in the velocity of the movements of the leader and the follower: Followers had more small changes in velocity than leaders, which indicates the difference in the roles. While the leader initiates the movement, carrying it out with a smooth trajectory and constant velocity, the follower needs to adjust to the movement "in real time" by realigning the sternum or the absolute distance to the partner to keep the embrace (and thus communication) stable. The follower's adjustments are indicated by many small changes in velocity due to adaptive micromovements (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 227).

While most tango dancers would agree that the leader is responsible for the use of space, any further definition and elaboration veers off into the realm of opinions and varying interpretations. I would like to give one example of this concerning the axis by directly juxtaposing two citations. Falcoff states that "the axis of balance . . . continue[s] to be a male responsibility"[28] (2014, 38), while Kimmel and Preuschl assert that "the follower . . . [is] providing the good posture, balance, and grounding that it takes for dynamic stability" (2016, 211). Both statements are valid; if the leader does not provide balance, the follower will not be able to remain stable. On the other hand, if the follower does not have a stable axis, it is not possible to respond to signals, and the balance of the leader is put in jeopardy. Both partners need to be in their axis, and both could be blamed if the couple lacks stability. I do not consider one or the other is the only person responsible for keeping the stability, because both need to be able to keep their own axis, but there are valid arguments for each of these interpretations.

Slightly more controversial is the issue of musical interpretation and, more generally, the freedom of movement choices of the follower. There are those dancers who see musical interpretation solely as the task of the leader. I have experienced not only in verbal communication but also on the dance floor that some leaders prefer that the follower does not actively participate in the improvisation and truly and "passively" follows the

leader. Even if the follower is not considered to be ideally "passive",[29] some say that musicality is the leader's domain, for instance, Falcoff, who states that the relationship with the music is a male responsibility (Falcoff 2014, 38). Such an understanding of the roles might imply a hierarchical order of the partners, with the leader connecting with the music and the follower simply executing what has been signaled. An entirely different view and interpretation of roles is elaborated on by Denniston based on her interactions with *milongueros* from the *época de oro*. She paraphrases that the ideal for a tango dancer was to make the woman feel good, which meant that "to lead was in fact to follow the follower" (Denniston 2007, 23). According to her interlocutors, the aim was to please the woman in the dance, not to force the man's ideas of movement onto her. This meant dancing for the woman, with the woman, but definitely not "dancing the woman" as if she were a passive puppet.

Kimmel and Preuschl identify a different way of verbalizing the responsibilities and tasks that also applies to musical interpretation: "the leader incorporates real-time offerings of the music, the partner, and the dancefloor and suggests a joint movement" (2016, 211). They see the relation between music–partners–surroundings as a constant, "real-time" interplay, with the leader channeling this into movement. They add that "besides some leeway for step timing or ornamentation, followers shape only the 'how' but not the 'what' of the tango, the improvised choices which are the leader's responsibility" (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 211). From my perspective, this description is fitting, as there is musicality in both "what" and "how" movements are carried out.

In recent decades, changing roles while dancing has gained in popularity among tango dancers in relation to queer tango innovations, but not exclusively (Liska 2017). Dancers who like to play with roles can do so by changing the lead in the middle of a piece of music. The change can be obvious, as with a change in the lead–follow embrace, or much more subtle, as with small "leading hacks" by the follower, or there may be a constant back-and-forth of leading impulses between the dancers. I consider such fluidity in changing the lead as a further development of the idea of dialogue between the two dancers. No matter how often the dancers change roles during a dance, one of them needs to take responsibility for initiating the steps and the use of space at all times.

I conclude this section by summarizing my ideals for leader and follower tasks, starting with the leader:

1. Be always aware of the space around the couple, and use it without causing collisions. This ensures safe and relaxed dancing for all present.
2. Give clear signals to the follower. If the leader's intention is clear and the impulses and signals are well-trained and embodied, the follower

will not end up confused about how to properly interpret them, which results in much more relaxed dancing for the couple. In reference to point 2 in the following list, this also incorporates the dynamics of leading impulses, meaning, the clear differentiation of dynamic variants.

3. Incorporate the follower's responses into the lead. To guarantee a dialogue between the couple, both dancers need to physically listen and respond to the other. If the leader sticks to an individual idea of movement progression and plans everything in advance without listening to and incorporating responses from the partner, there is no option for the follower to be part of a joint improvisation and creative interpretation of the music. The result is that the relation between the leader and the follower is a truly hierarchical one that eliminates the option for the follower to participate as well as reduces the dialogue to a monologue.

The following tasks are of great importance for the follower:

1. Match the movement speed of the leader; neither be behind—which gives the leader the feeling of having to drag the follower and being slowed down—nor be too fast in the pace, which might even throw both partners out of balance. Ideally (see point 3 in earlier list), the leader also matches the movement speed of the follower, settling on a comfortable tempo for them both.
2. Adjust to the quality of the movement in addition to the speed. Each movement can have a different quality—abrupt, smooth, gentle, forceful, etc.—and sometimes a leader has a particular style, or a leader changes the style to suit the music. In any case, it is important to mirror not only the movements and their speed but also the quality of these movements. As in the last point, a dialogue of movement quality can be a good way to a joint interpretation.
3. Don't carry out adornments that disturb the joint flow of movements. If the follower feels tempted to elaborately adorn at a moment when it does not fit into the joint movement—either because the leader does not allow enough time or space or because the follower's movements do not fit into a logical movement progression—this will throw off the dynamics of the joint dancing and interrupt the flow.
4. Do not overdo the interpretation of leading impulses. There is a wide range of dynamics causing a wide range of responses. Certainly, every leader and follower has a unique reaction pattern that differs slightly or substantially, depending on school, individual character, experience, and ability. What is important for good, versatile dancing is that there is a range of dynamics. If a leader gives a small impulse, the follower should react not with a large movement but in a manner sensitive to the quality and intensity of the impulse.

Improvisation

"Tango is a feeling that you dance to, and the feelings have neither sequences nor choreographies". This quote by the famous dancer of old times Cacho Dante (2008)[30] emphasizes poetically that what is essential to tango dancing is the flexibility in movement apart from choreographed step sequences. That tango dancing is based on movement improvisation to music is one of the most important characteristics separating it from most other couple dances.[31] In fact, the dancers (particularly leaders) who are considered good are those who reinvent their dancing constantly, develop new steps, and continue to surprise their partners. Since the nature of tango allows the partners to do different steps at the same time instead of just mirroring each other's movement, improvisational options are even more numerous. Through the lead–follow concept, it is true that the leader has more options and responsibilities in joint improvisation. Nonetheless, the follower is never limited to just one response, and improvisational elements are possible in nearly all the movement responses as well. Both leaders and followers can strive for their dancing to be unpredictable, with "the power one feels with mastery of a form and the ability to create it anew" (Merritt 2012, 64).[32]

To achieve this "power", a dancer first must learn steps and potential sequences to later break with them. A comparable process occurs in jazz music education: A musician must know the rules of jazz, harmonic progressions, melodic formulas, scales and their relations, standard tunes, and so forth. But for the musician to improvise, the rules that have been learned often need to be broken; sequences are deconstructed and rebuilt to create something new.

Kimmel and Preuschl researched improvisational strategies and tactics of tango dancers, focusing on the leader. Kimmel states that "even master improvisers with automatized skills, who let the music flow into their body in real time, need a projective intentionality and an anticipative awareness" (Kimmel 2012, 80). The authors detected several strategies that leaders use to create a series of dance steps that are based on learned structures yet originate on the spot:

> At the timescale of multi-step combinations, we took interest in routines of elements that leaders mentally store as mini-scripts. Frequently, improvisers may utilize these as basic material, e.g. to insert leg wraps, ornamentations, or to truncate and reconnect two scripts. Dancers may also use scripts as learning heuristics to define basic positions and nodes, while progressively modularizing and reshuffling their repertoire.
>
> (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 213)

They add that there is a difference between beginner and experienced dancers in the degree to which they deconstruct learned options for continuing in a particular situation during the dance:

> While novices tend to recall continuations from familiar or prototypical situations and choose from this pool, seasoned leaders learn to feel continuation affordances ad hoc. They recognize "doables" (in the sense of open degrees of freedom) from the dance floor situation even when it is new by using its proprioceptive, pressure, balance, and visual signatures. (Kimmel and Preuschl 2016, 212)

Finally, the improvisation of the couple is not only determined by the interaction between the partners and the individual skill of using "doables ad hoc". Two external factors also predetermine and influence it: the available space and the music. As the partner responsible for safe navigation, the leader must rule out choices that are not possible due to limitations of space in any given moment (also see Kimmel 2019). This means that even if the partners are in a position that allows for a variety of continuations, if a couple in front of them suddenly comes closer by doing a backward step, choices must be reconsidered immediately and adapted accordingly. The principle is the same as that elaborated by Kimmel and Preuschl; it is merely an additional impulse that the leader needs to incorporate into the potentially fitting "scripts" at that time. The main difference between partner communication and this external impulse is that partner communication is a physical (bodily) impulse, while space and the couple's surroundings need to be processed by vision. To complicate the situation further, impulses given by the music are processed by a third sense: hearing. If music is that which leads the couple (e.g., Amenábar 2009, 11), the leader needs to follow the music, which in improvisation means that the auditory stimulus should be the most important. Dancing musically involves starting from the musical stimulus and subordinate visual and physical stimuli. Looking at it the other way around from the perspective of the leader, it could also be said that the auditory just as the visual is yet another factor that reduces the improvisational options. In terms of creativity in dancing and the relation to the music, however, I feel the main impact of the music should not be considered a limitation but instead the initial stimulus that triggers all subsequent responses. For the follower, this cascade that the leader has to deal with can result in a dilemma or even frustration. If the follower feels inspired by the music and theoretically knows options for interpreting these physically—for instance, through *adornos* or discrete "leading hacks" in timing—but the leader, in Kaminsky's words, chooses to "override the follower's impulses" (2020, 7), the follower needs to follow the physical impulse and to ignore the auditory.

All in all, the improvisational aspects of tango dancing are shaped by individual abilities just as much as by the music, the lead–follow concept, and the communication between the dancers.

From these descriptions and explanations of the basic movement repertoire and the fundamental concepts that underlie tango dancing, it should be clear that all these features incorporate both functional as well as aesthetic aspects—and it is impossible to strictly differentiate between the two. It is a little bit like the chicken-and-the-egg problem; certain functional necessities cause aesthetic expressions, and aesthetic choices increase or limit functionalities in a certain direction. To provide one example of both options: if the connection with the partner (through the sternum) is one of the core functions that enables the joint improvisation, one of the resulting aesthetics is that the partners need to remain as stable as possible in front of each other. A gliding quality in the steps without much change in the vertical axis is an aesthetic outcome of this function. The other way around, if a gliding quality in the movements is the aesthetic choice dictated by social conventions and the preferences of practitioners, then connecting at the sternum—for instance, in contrast to the hips or one hand—to make lead–follow communication possible with little additional movement might be the best option for maintaining the preferred movement quality.

The constant intermingling of functional and aesthetic aspects is what has shaped tango dancing for over a century and continues to shape this dance form.

Tango Dance Styles

In the first chapter, I have shown how tango dancing evolved, yet this development was not always linear. As tango moved through time and space, the way in which it was danced multiplied into several tango styles. I use the term here based on Kaeppler, who defines style in a dance genre as "the *way* of performing—that is, realising or embodying the structure" (Kaeppler 2001, 52), where structure is that which defines the dance genre in general and differentiates it from other dance genres. She emphasizes that what a style within a genre is cannot be determined from "outside" but must be defined from the perspective of those who practice the genre and have embodied knowledge of it (Kaeppler 2001, 57). One such view from inside that supports this is Benzecry Sabá, who defines style in tango as "a number of established characteristics which define aesthetics" and "the way in which tango is danced" (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 69). In my view, a style is whatever the tango community considers to be a way of dancing that is different from other ways, has its own name, and is danced according to the general norms of socially danced *tango argentino*.

Some styles developed in parallel, for instance, local styles connected to different districts (*barrios*), like Villa Urquiza or Villa Devoto in Buenos Aires in the 1930s (Carozzi 2015, 136). Others were progressions from existing styles, radical innovations (for instance, *neotango* in the 1980s), countermovements to innovations (as *estilo milonguero*), or an incorporation of existing concepts from other styles into one that uses a new label or redefines an existing one. Currently, many of the styles that have developed over time are being practiced in parallel and continue to evolve (see Bolasell 2011, 163). Tango teachers either actively specialize in one style, which they perform and teach, or are passively categorized as representatives of a style—something with which they might not agree (see Merritt 2012, 51–52). Yet even if style debates are a constant topic in social tango dance discourses, there is no strict separation of styles in tango dance practice, and there is not even clarity as to how style name and movement repertoire are connected. One way to dance can have different names, or the way to dance differs within the frame of a name (Carozzi 2015, 136–137), which makes it impossible to unambiguously differentiate one style from another. It could even be argued that instead of defining a way to dance, the main function of a style name is its active use as a marketing label by tango dance teachers to distinguish their way of dancing from others and position themselves on the market. This also includes devotees of a style who want to distinguish their approach from the others.[33]

Though I acknowledge that distinct styles are potentially a construction based on group dynamics and economic circumstances, I nevertheless use and define them as movement repertoire categories because they are perceived as such by tango dancers, including myself. For this research, I decided to focus on three styles that are clearly distinguishable from each other despite existing variants and names[34] and are among the most popular styles currently being danced and taught in translocal contexts. Prominent representatives have established and continue to practice them, and a considerable group of dancers identify with them. These styles are *neotango*, *estilo milonguero*, and *tango de salón*.

Neotango

Neotango, which is also referred to as *tango nuevo*, arose in the 1990s and revolutionized tango dancing in general.[35] The two prominent tango dancers Gustavo Naveira and Fabian Salas are considered its creators, and Mariano "Chicho" Frúmboli,[36] Pablo Villaraza,[37] Norberto "el Pulpo" Esbrez, and Pablo Inza (Carozzi 2015, 156) are their most well-known disciples.[38] Not all perceived the emergence of *neotango* positively. Bolasell quotes a tango DJ from Buenos Aires as saying that it is "much more than a vogue, a real mess (*verdadero desbarajuste*)" (2011, 169). This pejorative

judgment expresses a critique of movement principles and indicates the conflicts that arose between traditional tango dancers and *neotango* dancers on the dance floor over the use of space. *Neotango* generally requires much more space, which is problematic on a crowded dance floor. In addition, it hinders the counterclockwise flow of dancing (the *ronda*); severe disputes have erupted between young tango dancers dancing this way and those who had learned tango in the *época de oro* (Carozzi 2015, 116).

Despite appearances, the main difference between *época de oro* and *neotango* dancing does not lie in the movements or the use of space. All authors agree that at the core of the tango dance movement revolution in the 1990s is a "radically different body concept"[39] (Bolasell 2011, 171), one which brought with it "a shift in the concept of the bodily experience of tango dancing itself" (Liska 2017, 11). "Local narratives ground tango nuevo in investigation and deconstruction" (Merritt 2012, 55), and the two names attached to this narrative are Naveira and Salas, who deconstructed tango dance repertoire for a deeper understanding of the movement principles and then rebuilt their tango from there. The new body awareness caused a reconsideration of the existing movement repertoire: "A modern understanding of the body in relation to tango therefore also means a reflexive attitude towards the traditional repertoire of steps, which leads to a body-conscious implementation of the movements learned"[40] (Krüger 2012, 191). The overall goal was a more organic and flowing quality to the movements, with a dynamic progression of movements and countermovements (Krüger 2012, 193). Along with the new movement principles came an exploration of possibilities that increased existing step and turn options not so much by adding new movements but by adding new *qualities* of movement.

Most prominently, a new option to embrace was introduced as standard, the "open embrace" (*abierto*). Both dancers stand in front of each other, but a little apart. On the open side of the embrace (right for the follower, left for the leader), the hands are held as in all other ways of dancing tango. On the closed side, the arms connect only at the lower arm, the follower grasping the leader's upper arm slightly above elbow level and the leader placing his hand on the lower back of the follower slightly above the waist. The additional arm's length generates more space between the two dancers, which allows more flexibility in leg movements, dissociation of each individual dancer, and a wider turning angle between the two dancers. The frame between the dancers is loosened in terms of the space between the bodies; it is even possible to let go of one or both arms as the dancers step around each other while staying close and always remaining oriented to the partner, even if one partner's back is temporarily turned toward the other's front. Such 360-degree turns by the dancers are called a *soltada* (let go) moment—a temporary opening of the embrace.

Because the dancers have less physical contact overall, communication in an open embrace is supplemented by the gaze. The dancers focus visually

on their partner, yet not on a particular part of the body, and definitely not on the other's eyes. Mostly, the dancers gaze with a blurred focus on the upper body, looking at an area ranging from the chin to the sternum. The eyes, in addition to the arms, serve to connect the sternums. Leading impulses are transmitted through the arms, yet instead of making pulling and pushing movements, the arms are used as a prolongation of the torso and included in the "body lead" as explained earlier.

More spacious dancing and "ample movements" (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 75) are another general feature of *neotango*. Many movements of the basic tango repertoire are carried out with wider reach, for instance, by bending the knees more to reach further with steps and adornments, and by lifting the legs higher up. In addition, the open-embrace position adds to the total space taken up by the couple.

Another movement element often used to qualify *neotango* are so-called "off-axis" movements. This term references the imagined vertical axis perpendicular to the floor that each dancer ideally requires to be stable in space. In off-axis movements, the vertical axis is tilted over on purpose in reference to the floor. The axis itself remains stable throughout the whole body. When both feet are close to each other, this only works and does not result in a fall if the weight is shared between both partners. Two general off-axis movement concepts have a name: *colgada* (hanging) and *volcada* (tipped over). In a *colgada*, the feet of the two dancers remain close, while their axes are tilted away from each other, with both dancers together forming a V shape. The two dancers need to hold each other firmly and keep a good balance between them so that neither of them falls over. In contrast, in the *volcada*, the two axes lean on each other, and the upper parts of the body are connected. The partners form a ^ shape. In a *volcada*, either one partner supports the weight of the other or both share the weight. Dancers mostly connect with their torsos for a *volcada*, though sometimes they might connect with their arms. In both *volcada* and *colgada*, sufficient core strength is needed to keep the body in a straight line so it does not "wobble" or "droop" while tilting out of the vertical axis (see Figure 4.7). As mentioned previously, off-axis movements are generally thought to be an innovation from the *neotango* repertoire. However, this might be a misconception. Merrit writes that "many Argentines young and old told me that these movements had long existed—they might not have been labeled or executed in the same manner that they are today, but the principle behind the step was already there" (Merritt 2012, 54). Even if they are not innovations, they feature prominently in *neotango* dancing, and if *colgada* and *volcada* elements are included in other styles (see following text), they are usually carried out in a more subtle way, giving them a different aesthetic—and sometimes they might not be visible at all.

I would like to use the execution of a *voleo* (also written *boleo*) as an example of how *neotango* is defined mainly by the difference in the quality

Figure 4.7 A *volcada* (left) and *colgada* (right), demonstrated by Wolfgang Kienreich and Kendra Stepputat.

Source: Photograph by Oskar Stepputat and Anton Stepputat.

of a movement instead of a different movement repertoire. A *voleo* (to volley) is a quick movement of one leg, basically a lift of the foot by flexing the leg. It is a movement that can be led or done as an *adorno* by both dancers, though it is more often performed by the follower. There are several different *voleo* categories. Benzecry Sabá (2010, 67) lists five options: high and low *voleos*, *voleos* crossing in the front and in the back, and linear *voleos*. The direction and the height of a *voleo* vary, but the basic movement and the impulse are the same. *Voleos* are found in all tango styles, yet the quality and the quantity of *voleos* in a dance differ. While *Neotango* uses all types of *voleos*, the most significant are the far-reaching *voleos*: those with maximum height and those with maximum width, for instance, a high linear *voleo* to the back (see Figure 4.8).

All authors and dancers I talked to agree that *neotango* revolutionized tango dance principles in manifold ways: by moving away from sequences and back to basic elements fit for improvisation, by conceptualizing movement principles, and by opening up movement possibilities to new dynamics and combinations. With these innovations, *neotango* has ultimately

Figure 4.8 Low *voleo* (left) and high *voleo* (right), demonstrated by Wolfgang Kienreich and Kendra Stepputat.

Source: Photograph by Oskar Stepputat and Anton Stepputat.

influenced the way dancers of other styles dance in a significant manner, even if these other styles are theoretically "older".

Cristina Ladas and Homer Ladas

Cristina and Homer—the "*neotango*" dancers in my project—are based in California. They are the founders and directors of the Organic Tango School,[41] which is a virtual place for teaching and learning tango. Both started dancing in 1997. They met in 2001 and started working as a professional tango teaching couple in 2002. Both have "a pre-tango background in many other physical activities".[42] Contrary to many other tango teaching couples, Cristina und Homer do not mention any of their teachers by name, saying instead that they have learned with many teachers, danced and practiced with many fellow tango dancers, and traveled frequently to tango cities, including Buenos Aires. On their "bio" page, they introduce themselves with a performance from the 2012 Tango Alchemie festival in Prague. In this performance, Cristina is first seen in a silk aerials act. Next,

Homer performs a bandoneon solo. Finally, they dance tango together to non-tango music. That they chose this as one of their favorite performances is significant in several ways. First, it shows their interest in the performing arts to be more than tango dance; second, it conveys that since Homer can play the bandoneon, he is also well-versed in tango music; and finally, by choosing a non-tango piece as performance music, they make the statement that tango dancing is a flexible dance art not bound to tango music. This does not mean that they do not value it, for they do: this is illustrated by Homer's bandoneon performance as well as by his statement that he is "a student of learning how to play tango music for social dancers".[43] In fact, tango music has a strong place in their teaching. Homer also performed as tango DJ and gave courses in this area. However, non-tango music has its place in their dancing and teaching as well.

In all their activities, they place an emphasis on community aspects and "open-sourcing" materials to provide access to their knowledge and teaching. Their mission statement reads: "To provide globally accessible education and strengthen community resources in Argentine tango social dancing". Even at tango festivals, they make a statement about the importance of community aspects by keeping their solo performances to a minimum—at times avoiding them entirely—and by dancing with local community members throughout the evening. On their Organic Tango School website, they offer several didactic classes designed for virtual teaching and learning for a fee. Yet a vast number of teaching materials are available online for free: the YouTube channel "tangostudent",[44] hosted by "Charles, a local tango student", founded in 2007,[45] features more than 450 didactic tango presentations filmed at the end of an on-site class by Homer and Cristina. This collection of films has been influential for many tango dancers all around the globe. The channel currently has more than 14,000 subscribers and more than 7 million views altogether. Some of the featured videos have more than 200,000 views.

In their teaching, they stress organic movements, by which they mean movements that feel like the natural consequence of a previous movement, with a focus on comfort in the couple, adaptability to new partners, navigational skills, and of course proper awareness of the music playing. Cristina and Homer are often linked to *neotango* dancing, and many of their classes revolve around elements that are at the core of the *neotango* repertoire. Although the translocal tango public might place them as such, they do not consider themselves to be prominent representatives of *neotango*,[46] preferring to call their dance style "organic tango". They purposefully include elements from a variety of different styles and adapt their dancing flexibly to the event, the music, and the partner. Their philosophy is more to develop an individual style than to become versed in any particular internationally marketed tango style.[47]

Estilo Milonguero

Developed in the 1990s, *estilo milonguero* (*milonguero* style) is inspired by the tango danced in "some parts of central and south Buenos Aires in the 1950s" (Denniston 2007, 200). The name given to this style was chosen to imply a connection to the *época de oro* dancing, which went along with a "selection, appropriation" and the construction of a relation to "pre-existing experiences and practices" (Morel 2011, 197).[48] The codified *milonguero* style is generally attributed to one individual: Susana Miller, who systematized and codified the close-embrace style of dancing in her teaching in the 1990s. She worked in collaboration with others (for instance, Cacho Dante, Ana Schapira), yet it was her name that became prominently attached to the style (Carozzi 2015, 139).[49] Denniston critically states that representatives of this style might claim

> not that this was *one* of the ways in which Tango was danced in the Golden Age, but that it was the *only* way, reinforcing the unfounded prejudice that complex figures were a distortion of Tango with no place on the social dance floor.
>
> (Denniston 2007, 200)

While some consider it to be closest to the historical movement repertoire, others denigrate the style. For instance, Bolasell defines *milonguero* dancing as "quite repetitive, it is easy to learn, it is danced *pregado-apretado* (glued tight) and it encourages seduction,[50] even to inexperienced dancers. To not be soporific, you need a rich musical listening and a lot of feeling"[51] (Bolasell 2011, 164).

Indeed, *milonguero* is characterized by an "understatement" of movements, which are small and compact. The legs are kept on the floor, and the couple uses very little space. This is said to be in the tradition of the crowded dance halls of the 1940s, where leg entanglements, high *voleos*, and long strides were not possible. Hence, the focus is on walking: Benzecry Sabá notes that "one of the most important characteristics of this style is the Caminata with short and simple steps" (2010, 74). What Bolasell terms the only way to "not be soporific" is defined by others as the main purpose of *milonguero* dancing, which is to focus mainly on the connection to the partner and also the "music-interpretational value of the danced movements" (Krüger 2012, 190) or to shift the "emphasis . . . from technical skills of display toward a harmonious response to the music" (Petridou 2015, 63).[52] Regardless of the musical factor, *milonguero* dancers would probably agree with the statement that "showing off" for onlookers with complicated figures is contrary to the ideal of *estilo milonguero*; the focus should be on dancing with and for the partner, not for an audience (see also Petridou 2015, 63–64).[53]

The most important and obvious signifier of *milonguero* is the close-embrace hold (*cerrado*). The arms are wrapped as far as possible around the partner's back. The torsos are in close contact, which is enhanced by a slight leaning against the partner, called *apilado*. The partners share their weight but maintain their own axis.[54] In addition to the tight wrapping of the arms and the torso contact, dancers often lean their right temples against each other—if the difference in body height allows—which adds to the physical closeness and enhances the intended feeling of "fusing" or "melting" into each other. The position of the dancers is almost in front of each other, yet slightly to the left. Their heads need to be side by side and not directly facing; otherwise, both dancers would not be able to see their surroundings, which is critical for leading.

Another topic is the inclusion/exclusion of dissociation technique. Some teachers convey *milonguero* as "dancing in a block", which means both partners stay in front of each other, and their torsos are closely connected at all times. In addition, they do not dissociate the upper from the lower body to generate an internal twist for initiating a rotation or a pivot. Instead, if dancers turn around a shared central axis, for instance, in a *giro*, backward and forward steps are replaced by side steps that cross behind or in front of the standing leg, which enables a turning movement without any need to move away from the partner. Similarly, *ocho* movements incorporate less pivoting and more crossing over in the steps.[55] However, alternative teaching approaches incorporate dissociation to allow more flexibility in the leg movements and pivoting options while the partners remain as close as possible to each other. This technique has been termed "rolling close embrace" because turning movements can cause a shift in the connecting points from the frontal sternum contact to the left or right of it. This can feel like a horizontal "rolling" motion between the two torsos.

The movement repertoire of *estilo milonguero* dancing is often experienced as being limited and even boring with its focus on steps and joint turns as well as its exclusion of *voleos* and other, more complex sequences or figures. Basically, anything is avoided that involves moving outside of the couple's occupied frame of movement and potentially invading another couple's space. For instance, Bolasell calls the *ocho cortado*[56] the queen figure (*figura reina*) of this style because it "allows moving on a surface the size of a pocket handkerchief, without diminishing the proximity of the bodies"[57] (Bolasell 2011, 165). Yet teachers of close-embrace tango dancing—whether they call themselves *milonguero* or not—have increased the range of the movement repertoire by focusing on possibilities inside the couple's space. Today, a wide variety of movement options are included, from inward *ganchos* (hooks of one partner's leg around the leg of the other) to a wide variety of *sacadas* (steps into the space of the partner) and even minimal off-axis movements in a *colgada* fashion. Any movement

that is possible in the close embrace and does not extend beyond the couple's space on the dance floor may be implemented. Although some dancers deliberately limit their repertoire to the previously mentioned "simple walking and turning", *milonguero* can also be a fusion of *neotango* movement and lead–follow principles into close-embrace dancing.

Maja Petrović and Marko Miljević

Maja and Marko are the professional tango dancers who participated in the project as representatives of *milonguero*-style dancing.[58] They started to dance tango in Zagreb in 2002 and began teaching in 2007. Both have a background in other movement techniques: Marko in basketball, Maja in other dance forms (ballroom, Latin, ballet, and contemporary). The influential teachers they list on their website represent a broad variety of styles and approaches to tango dancing. Learning from all of them—and listing them on their website—signifies Maja and Marko's progression in developing their own way of dancing. They actively incorporate this broad variety of styles into their way of *milonguero* dancing. Maja and Marko started their full-time teaching career in 2014. They first became influential as traveling professional tango teachers in Europe. Since 2018, they have also been invited to locations in North America and Asia.

In their online mission statement about their teaching, Maja and Marko start with the sentence "While our performances are always improvised, our lessons are most certainly not". Their lessons are very well-structured and organized, the concepts thought through in detail. Part of this structure is the incorporation of different levels of the students' tango danceability into one class. Each class includes (1) technique, (2) partner communication,[59] and (3) musicality. A further indicator of the importance they place on dance–music relations in their dancing and teaching is their statement that "connecting with our partner to the music" is one of three main ideas in their dancing, along with "feeling good" and "looking good". One important statement relates to their style, which they categorize as *milonguero*, in particular, the feature of the close embrace. They do not see the close embrace as limiting, presenting it instead as a feature open to exploration, yet they always aim to carry out movements jointly to the music:

> One of the things we like the most about tango is the close embrace. We see it as a living, changing thing that enables us to transmit the movement that interprets the music. We like to play with the possibilities and limits of close embrace.

Finally, they explain how their dancing focuses on musical interpretation by varying the quality of steps, not by incorporating complicated

movement sequences: "changing the quality and character of the movement can bring great diversity in our dance, even in the simplest steps. This again enables us to interpret many different orchestras without reaching for complicated figures". Maja and Marko's self-representation on their websites well represents their *milonguero* dancing: the emphasis on the close embrace, a good connection to the partner, and musical interpretation without many complicated figures.

Tango De Salón

Benzecry Sabá translates *salón* into "dance hall style" (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 77) and dates the origin of *tango de salón* to the time when tango dancing became acceptable in high society after its first trip to Europe in the 1910s. He writes that "a new style was taking shape, a way of dancing that brought with it an endless array of possibilities for movement and posture, that would endure until today" (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 69). Denniston claims that the *tango de salón* was the "mature" tango that had arrived in the *salón* (Denniston 2007, 203). The main differences to earlier forms of dancing was that the embrace became more flexible, more space existed between the two partners, and both dancers stood in their own axis (not leaning against each other with their torsos as in *apilado*). Seen from above, the chests connect more on the embrace side (followers left, leaders right), and the side of the connected arms is more open, giving the couple a V shape. In present-day practice, one of the significant elements is that the embrace is not constant, changing from close-in walking to more open in turns and figures (Bolasell 2011, 166, Morel 2011, 198). It is impossible to trace a linear, historical development of *tango de salón* as one continuously distinct style because it has changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century. For instance, it could also be traced back to innovations in the 1960s, when dancers moved away from "walking" toward incorporating more advanced step combinations (e.g., *ganchos*, *sacadas*, *voleos*) and even called their dancing *salón-fantasía* because of the exhibition of technical abilities (Benzecry Sabá 2015, 154). This style could also be related to a movement that began in the 1980s which was based on *fantasía* movement aesthetics of the revived tango dance practice following the performance tradition of the tango shows.

Regardless of the many layers of its genesis, *tango de salón* in current parlance may refer to all ways that tango is danced at a *milonga*, which is also the actual meaning of the term: tango danced at a dance hall (*salón*). In current *tango argentino* practice, however, it is also seen as a style with certain features that differentiate it from *milonguero* as well as *neotango*. Morel argues that the denominator *tango de salón* turned into a term for a style in the 1990s as a reaction to the "formalization and experimentation" caused by new teaching methods. By terming a way of dancing

tango de salón, it could be differentiated from other "characteristic" styles (*milonguero* and *neotango*)[60] (Morel 2011, 203).

The semi-open embrace, or more precisely, the change between a close and an open embrace, may be viewed as a negotiation of traditional, historical movement patterns on the one hand and contemporary movement aesthetic and principles on the other (Krüger 2012, 194). It is certainly true that dancers who open up their embrace while dancing acquire new possibilities for both individual and joint movements. It is also true that the close embrace is the iconic aesthetic of tango dancing and that the only way to maintain this while applying movement dynamics derived from the tango dance revolution brought about by *neotango* is by opening up to incorporating more complex elements, figures, and—on a more profound level—dynamic movement principles. Current *tango de salón* has adopted *neotango* movement principles into the movement repertoire yet uses them in a way that is closer to pre-*neotango* dance aesthetics and principles. *Salón* movement aesthetics are described by several authors as a striving to maintain elegance and smoothness (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 77, Morel 2011, 213), which refers just as much to walking as to body posture and the execution of movements in general.

While Benzecry Sabá (2010, 77) wrote in 2010 that *salón* does not include leg entanglements such as *ganchos*, *voleos*, and *sacadas*, this is no longer the case in 2020. In fact, these complex leg movements are now considered a prominent feature of *salón* dancing, and it is even placed between *milonguero* and stage styles (Liska 2017, 8), because the semi-open embrace enables the inclusion of more complex choreographic figures. *Tango de salón* is defined by complex figures and sequences, including many turns, such as *giros* (Morel 2011, 213). A couple walking in *salón* style takes more far-reaching steps, giving the impression they are gliding through space (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 77). This is mirrored in a description by Naveira, who stated in an interview[61] that a couple in *salón* style (which, in the 1990s, also had the denominator "Urquiza") is recognizable because it "advances with long steps, treading as if with gloves".[62] An interesting musical classification of *salón* dancing was made by Morel, who writes that it is more appropriate for "not so 'rhythmical' musical orchestrations in tango"[63] (Morel 2011, 212). It is true that many of the features described here as typical of *salón* might relate better to lyrical music (slowness, smoothness, pauses), yet in current practice, couples who dance this way change their movement qualities to quicker and more impulsive movements if these relate to the music better. This does not diminish the elegance that is sought.

Tango de salón is also said to be particularly suitable for dancing to and with the music (for instance, Morel 2011, 212). This claim, made by all tango dancers for their respective style, shows that regardless of "style", an

important feature of tango dancing is to relate to and interpret the music. The quality of movements and the aesthetic preferences might differ, but at the core of dancing tango are two elements: the connection to the partner and the improvised interpretation of the music.

Yanina Quiñones and Neri Píliu

Yanina and Neri have danced together since 2006 and call their dancing *tango de salón* without hesitation. The teachers that were most influential for them who are mentioned by name in their biography are Carlos and Rosa Pérez, Pupi Castello, Gloria and Eduardo Arquimbau, Gerardo Portalea, Toto Faraldo, and Milena Plebs.[64] In addition, they received formal tango dance training at the Academia de Estilos de Tango Argentino (ACETA).[65] Yanina and Neri are highly skilled in tango dance techniques, showcasing complex movements and choreographies in their dance presentations. Their background is both in stage tango (tango *escenario*) as well as in socially danced tango (tango *de pista*). They emphasize this in their advertisements by mentioning how they have won international competitions in both social dance tango and stage dance tango.[66] Born in Argentina, they moved to Italy, where they founded their tango school "Corazon al Sur Tango Club" in Salerno in 2013.[67] They are the founders (2016), artistic directors, and principal dancers of a tango stage dance company, "Tango Rouge Company",[68] with which they have toured internationally. Public dance performances at regular *milongas* (many in Buenos Aires), in stage productions, and at international tango festivals are an important part of their professional tango life. Among their achievements, they mention prominent tango orchestras they have performed with (e.g., Color Tango, La Orquesta de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, and La Orquesta Sans Souci), emphasizing their appreciation of dancing to live music. Finally, they have a busy schedule as guest tango dance teachers at international tango festivals.

In teaching, their main emphasis is on proper technique and tango students' physical abilities as the foundation for relating to their partner, dancing musically, and finding individuality in the dance. This is also included in their mission statement, where they write that in their teaching, they "aim to convey all the necessary elements to the students to be masters of their own body and at the same time develop your own tango".[69] In their classes, they cover a wide variety of topics ranging from basic techniques to advanced step sequences, embellishments, the relation between the two dancers, and last but not the least, musical dancing.

To conclude this section about different tango styles, I would like to quote Morel again on the issue of style versus individualism in the dance:

> When faced with these discursive constructions that express some of the generic or "typical" features of the style, paradoxically, if we pay

> attention to or observe the techniques and ways of executing or putting these features into motion, we will see that their particular expressions can vary considerably among current masters, teachers, and practitioners.[70]
>
> (Morel 2011, 213)

Style is one way to categorize tango dancing, but like all categories in a living and constantly developing arts practice, it changes, overlaps, and is better understood as a segment on a continuum than a category with clear, strict boundaries. Individuals might define themselves as practitioners of one style or another, yet they also have their personal styles and might cross over from one to another.

The following section explores tango movement repertoire beyond, or maybe more precisely, as the fundament of style. Cristina and Homer, Maja and Marko, Yanina and Neri are representatives of different styles, but in the research lab, we found more commonalities and all-encompassing rules for tango movements than style differences.

Movement Repertoire Motion Capture Analysis

Basic tango movement repertoire is defined by steps and pivots and countless variations and combinations thereof. Walking and pivoting are of course not particular to *tango argentino*—dancers of probably all structured movement systems pivot and walk, as people walk and pivot in everyday life without defining their movements as dance. To understand tango movement better, we need to have a closer look at the way steps and pivots are carried out, adding the *how* to the *what*.

To obtain detailed insight into movements on a micro-analytical level, I decided to use motion capture technology. Motion capture (mocap)[71] allows us to capture movements on a very granular level, down to millimeters. Positions and movements of the body can be tracked in relation to both the surrounding space and other bodies moving in it—if captured as well—and over time. This allows a reconstruction and an exact reproduction of the captured movement in three dimensions. The one caveat is that the mocap representation shows an abstract version of the body, which can be a segmented puppet, a skeleton-like stick figure, or a cloud of dots representing the captured joints. This might be inconvenient for later visual examination of the captured data (Stepputat 2021). Apart from the fact that movement can be represented in 3D and watched from all possible angles and distances (see Figure 4.9), the most important advantage of mocap is the captured data itself, which can be analyzed quantitatively and provides statistical insight into the movement that is conveyable by data visualizations.

Carrying out mocap recordings requires extensive expertise. I neither have a thorough knowledge of the technical aspects of motion capture nor

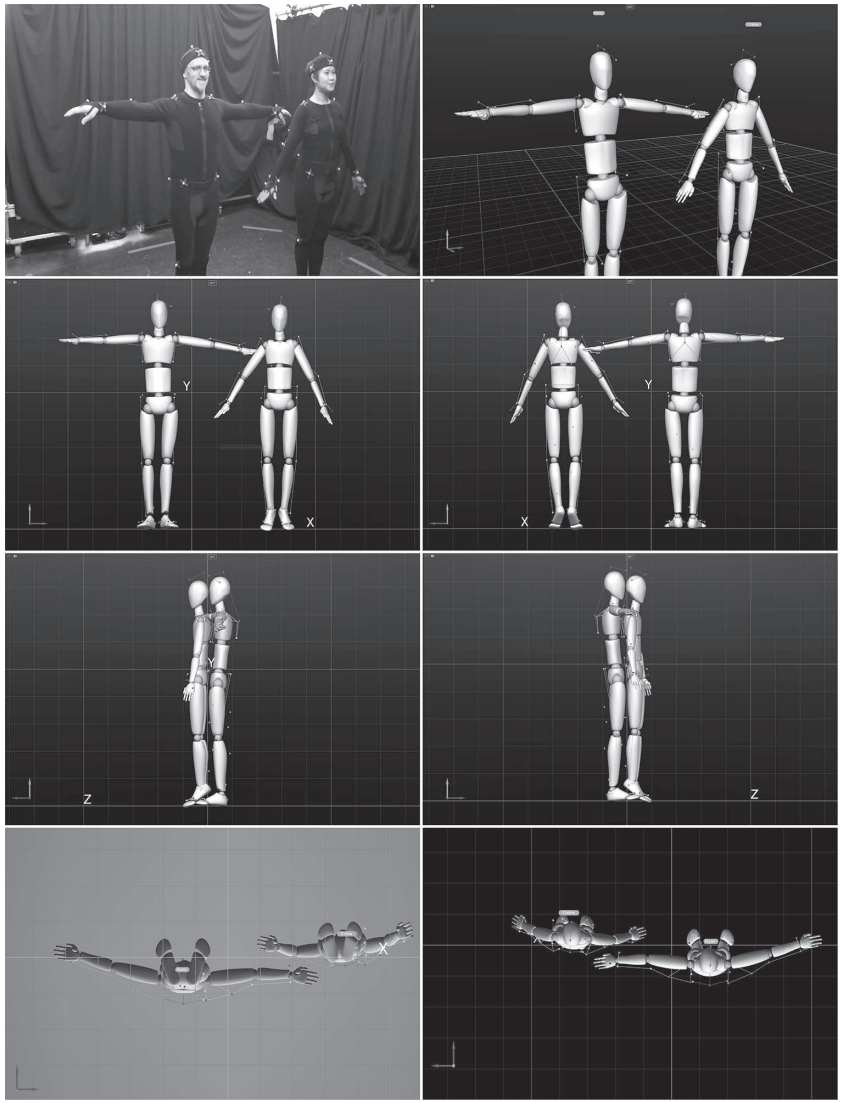

Figure 4.9 The tango dancers Cristina Ladas and Homer Ladas and their mocap representations.

Source: Graphic by Christopher Dick.

am I versed in statistical analysis, or the software and programming environment MATLAB used for processing the captured data.[72] The knowledge I have is passive: I understand what is being done and can assist in the process, but I am not well versed enough to carry out the recording and the analysis by myself. Hence, I cooperated with specialists in the field

throughout the mocap recording and analysis process, remaining in constant exchange and collaboratively taking advantage of the possibilities for analysis provided by the system and software.[73]

To gather movement data, I decided to work qualitatively by focusing on recording a few expert tango dancers instead of a broader sample of many dancers. The decision was made mainly due to practical reasons—resources and lab times being limited—but also because it seemed feasible to gather data that is representative of a particular way of tango dancing and continue to work with this material. The expert dancers who collaborated on the project have already been introduced in the previous section: Cristina Ladas and Homer Ladas, Maja Petrović and Marko Miljević, and Yanina Quiñones and Neri Píliu. They are experts, and they are professionals, meaning, the couples' main income is derived from teaching and performing *tango argentino*. I invited these three couples for several reasons. All are internationally renowned and were prominent in their styles at the time of the research. They are influential in their teaching and online presence in tango dance networks. For the project, they became representatives of different styles of dancing tango—even if these categorizations and distinctions are arbitrary at a certain level. In addition, I know all three couples from teaching contexts and have followed their progress as professionals for some time, which meant that we did not have to start building a relationship from zero when we went into the lab. Mutual trust and a level of acquaintance had been established previously.

We invited the couples to Graz, where we were able to use the motion capture equipment of the Institute of Electronic Music and Acoustics at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz. The optical motion capture system used was OptiTrack with 12 cameras.[74] The cameras emit infrared light, which is reflected by markers in the room. The reflections are then captured by the cameras and processed by a central computer in a proprietary software connected to the camera system.

Preparing for a recording session is a long procedure. First, the cameras need to be installed properly on racks that ideally are detached from the floor to avoid transmission of vibrations from the floor to the cameras. In most cases—and also for our recordings—the cameras are placed in the top corners of a room to cover as much space as possible from the overhead perspective. Next, the cameras are calibrated so they "know" where they are in the room and in relation to each other. This is important because the recordings of the cameras must be combined to completely capture the motion. This is only possible if the absolute positions in the room and the relative position to the other cameras are unambiguous.

When the dancers arrive, they put on tight black Velcro suits, including caps. Reflective markers are then attached to the suits to capture the joints (see Figure 4.10). Each marker spot needs to be determined with high precision; otherwise, the recordings might give a false impression of

Figure 4.10 Christopher Dick (left) and the author attaching markers to Maja Petrović (center).

Source: Photograph by Mattia Scassellati.

the movements (Levine et al. 2012, 94). For our research, we used a full-body model with 40 markers (see Figure 4.12). In contrast to other standard body models, we chose to add additional markers on the feet so foot articulation could be measured.

To let the system know how the feet are articulated, we first attached the markers to the dancers' bare feet and calibrated the system with these joints. Only after the system had identified which markers represented

Figure 4.11 The markers on Yanina Quiñones's feet and shoes.
Source: Photograph by Kendra Stepputat.

which foot joints did the dancers put on their shoes. We needed to re-attach certain markers to the shoes, which indeed produced some imprecision in the measurements. However, this was the only solution we could come up with that allowed shoes with heels to be included in the system (see Figure 4.11).

Dancing in a mocap laboratory is a very unusual setting for any dancer and has an influence on their performance. The six tango dancers who agreed to dance in this unusual research setting are all professional "performers". Part of being a traveling teacher involves performing live dances at evening *milongas*. In addition, teaching couples present their dancing in front of their students and let themselves be recorded in performance and teaching situations. Therefore, having to perform their art at a predefined time for an audience and being recorded while doing so is not unusual, which is why all of them coped quite well with the pressure of "someone watching". Homer and Cristina, for instance, retrospectively stated that:

> It was definitely different from dancing in a class or at a milonga/práctica but not so much so that we could not focus on connecting and moving. In other words, the environment was a more artificial representation but the movement was more or less authentic.[75]

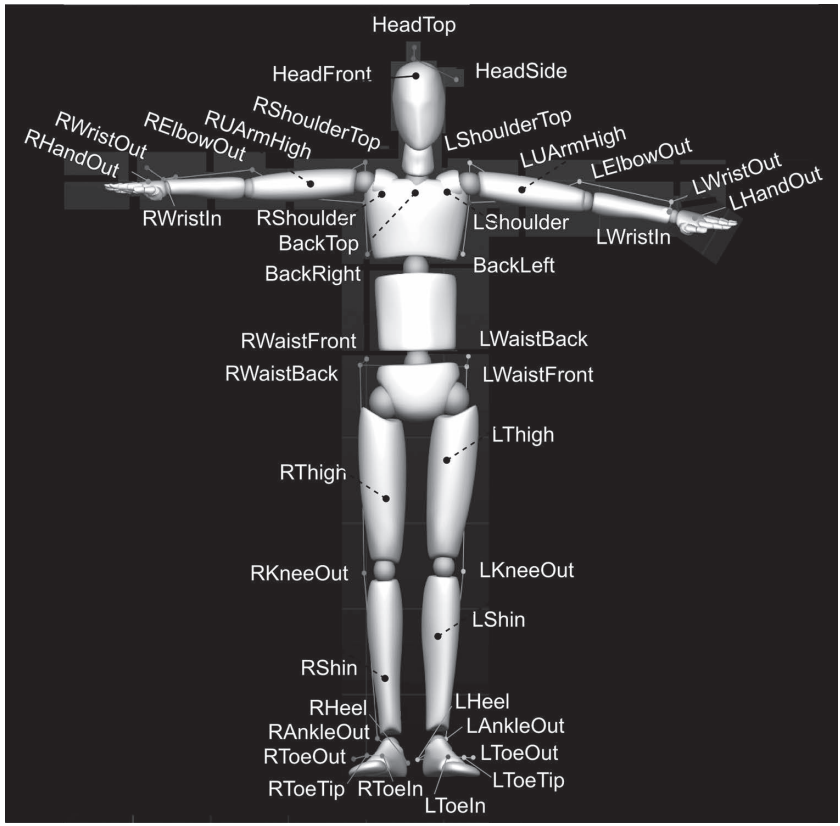

Figure 4.12 Motion capture model figure with all markers and names of markers. Markers with dashed lines are on the back of the figure.

Source: Graphic by Kendra Stepputat.

The most limiting element in the whole setup appeared to be the suits: even if all the dancers were used to performing in costumes, they had certainly never danced in skin-tight suits and with markers glued to their feet. Another limitation was the space. The room we used gave the couples only approximately 20 square meters to dance in. Fortunately, these professional dancers are also used to dancing in limited spaces, for instance, in crowded *milongas*. All these "laboratory" elements necessarily influence the dancing and can be very disturbing for the dancers. It is therefore essential to create a working atmosphere in the lab that generates a feeling of teamwork with the ideal of working toward a common goal for everybody involved and present. In other words, the dancers were not treated and seen as research objects or data providers but instead as partners in the research, just as they would be in any other fieldwork environment.[76] On

the lab days, we made sure that the dancers had sufficient time to get used to the suits and surroundings, try out movements, and just fool around in the suits—including photograph sessions the dancers initiated. The dancers were, of course, informed about the research ideas and aims and actively shaped the recording sessions, for instance, by suggesting solutions to marker problems, or by requesting additional recordings of movements, which we happily carried out.

The tasks all dancers had to do in the lab were: (1) Tapping along to music at a tango walking pace. We decided to have the dancers tap with their feet instead of fingers because we assumed that tapping with the foot is closer to the experience of walking and less abstract than finger-tapping. This task was carried out individually by all dancers. The tapping period lasted for about 1 minute. (2) Regular walking. Dancers were asked to walk through the room as they would walk in the street, with no reference to tango. There were no auditory stimuli in this task. (3) Tango walking. We asked all dancers to walk in the given space with a random combination of forward, backward, and side steps, without pivots or embellishments, though pivots between steps were allowed to make optimal use of the space. As with the first task, dancers walked alone in the room. (4) Taking steps and pivoting. In this task, the dancers danced as a couple. They were allowed to do step and pivoting/turning combinations but should keep their dancing "simple", avoiding *adornos* and leg entanglements like *ganchos*. (5) Presenting *ochos*. We asked dancers to show their individual *ocho* technique, both in leading *ochos* and in carrying them out without a lead. (6) Free tango dancing. In the final task, dancers could dance however they wanted, without any limitations.

The tasks that had a relation to the beat or music (tapping, tango walking, walking and pivoting/turning, and free dancing) were each performed to four different audio stimuli. Three of the stimuli were tango music samples, while the fourth was a click track of isochronous beats which we used as a control entity. The first tango piece was chosen based on the results of the comprehensive online survey presented in more detail in Chapter 2. The piece "Recuerdo" was composed and recorded by Osvaldo Pugliese and his *orquesta típica* in 1944 and ranked number 1 in terms of "danceability". The second track for the four tasks was the experimental tango piece for the danceability experiment (see Chapter 2) composed by tango pianist and composer Robert Schmidt, called "Graz 1". According to musical analysis of existing tango pieces that were ranked "most danceable", this new piece has all features of an "ideal tango for dancing". Finally, the third piece was individually chosen by the couples as music to which they feel comfortable dancing. Yanina and Neri chose "Ensueños" by Carlos di Sarli from 1943, Cristina and Homer's favorite piece was "Pocas Palabras" by Ricardo Tanturi from 1941, and Maja and Marko decided to dance to

"El Último Café" in a recording by Juan D'Arienzo from 1964. The tango walking, walking and pivoting, and free dancing were each carried out for the entire length of the musical pieces.

The fourth audio stimulus was the click track of isochronous beats with a bpm of 120, which is the average tempo of tango music for dancing (Anagnostopoulou 2012). The tasks regular walking and *ochos* were carried out without any audio stimulus.

The data sets we collected over the course of several hours—with snack breaks—in the lab, with each of the three couples as the basis for the following analysis. Many more options to analyze the captured data are possible, and we will continue to explore them with further ideas, concepts, and methods. Here I focus on the analysis of three movement elements in tango: the forward step, the backward step, and the basic pivoting technique exemplified in a tango motif *ocho atrás* (backwards *ocho*) and *ocho adelante* (forwards *ocho*). The aim of analyzing these elements is to understand movement principles of tango steps and pivots on a granular level. Furthermore, I explore how the biomechanically detected features correspond to the terminology and verbalizations used by tango dancers and tango teachers in general.

Tango Forward Steps

The analysis of tango forward steps is based on gait analysis, which is a common field in biomechanics and clinical analysis. The definition of *gait* in contrast to *walking* is "the manner or style of walking" (Levine et al. 2012, 29). A *gait cycle* is "a time interval between two successive occurrences of one of the repetitive events of walking" (Levine et al. 2012, 30). As a convention, the "initial contact"[77] of one foot—by convention the right foot—with the floor is used as the starting point of a gait cycle. In mocap, it is detected when the maximum distance has been reached between the ankle of the standing leg and the heel marker on the moving leg.[78] Within a gait cycle, "stance phase" (when the foot has contact with the floor) and "swing phase" (when the foot does not have contact with the floor) of each leg alternate.

A *step* as defined in tango dance teaching does not start with the initial contact with the floor but instead with what in gait analysis is termed "mid-swing" or "feet adjacent": the moment when both heels are the closest to each other (see Figure 4.13). In the following step analysis, I use the definition and visualization of a gait cycle in accordance with the established vocabulary. Using this systematic description of gait allows to compare the different gaits based on a methodical foundation of well-established definitions and features of all types of gaits (see Figure 4.13).

We extracted gait cycles of both left and right foot from the individual tango walking recordings of the six tango dancers and averaged the data

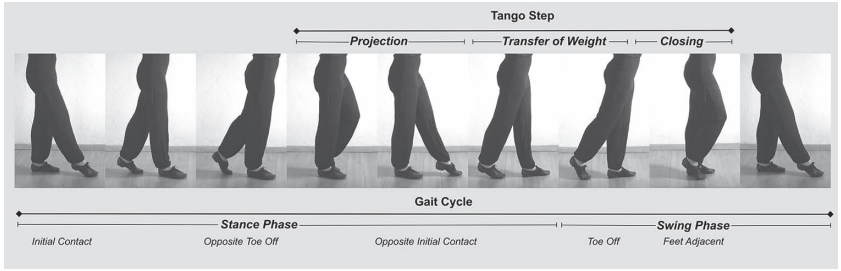

Figure 4.13 Definition and explanatory terms of a tango step contrasted with definition and explanatory terms of a gait cycle.

Source: Graphic by Kendra Stepputat.

for each dancer within each music sample, including gait cycles that started with both the left and the right legs. The first important insight we gained was that dancers have an individual way of tango walking that in our data does not differ in the three music tracks and the click track. The following Figure 4.14 shows the visualization of the front-step gait cycle by the six dancers, each to the three different musical stimuli plus click track, regarding the "heel speed", which shows the speed with which the free foot moves in the swing phase of a step. The heel speed is captured in cm/s across the gait cycle.[79] Each plot shows the mean (line) and standard deviation (area) of the detected gait cycles (in normalized duration) in the given musical example.[80] Figure 4.14 shows the movement of one leg (left or right) in the gait cycle. In the first half, the leg is not moving (heel speed = 0), because in this half of the gait cycle, it is the supporting leg and remains stable in space. In the second half, the leg starts to move forward, passes the other (standing) leg, and slows down again when the weight has once again fully shifted onto it.

By looking at the heel speed, we can detect the individual walking style regarding control of the speed of the free leg. Obvious differences in the contour of the velocity graph are visible between the six dancers. What exactly the differences in shape signify will be explained shortly; for now, it is important that the contours look similar in response to all four stimuli, while strong visible differences are noticeable between the six dancers. My interpretation of this result is that the dancers have an individual style of walking which is deeply ingrained in their tango movement competency. This does not mean that the dancers do not adjust their movements to the character of the music; it merely shows that the differences are not detectable in heel speed.

Given this strong similarity between the heel speed graph contours of the individual dancers, we decided to average the dancers' individual step patterns across all music samples to have a broader data basis.[81] In this averaged front-step gait cycle, individual movement patterns are even more easily distinguishable. In addition, we combined heel speed with ankle distance.[82]

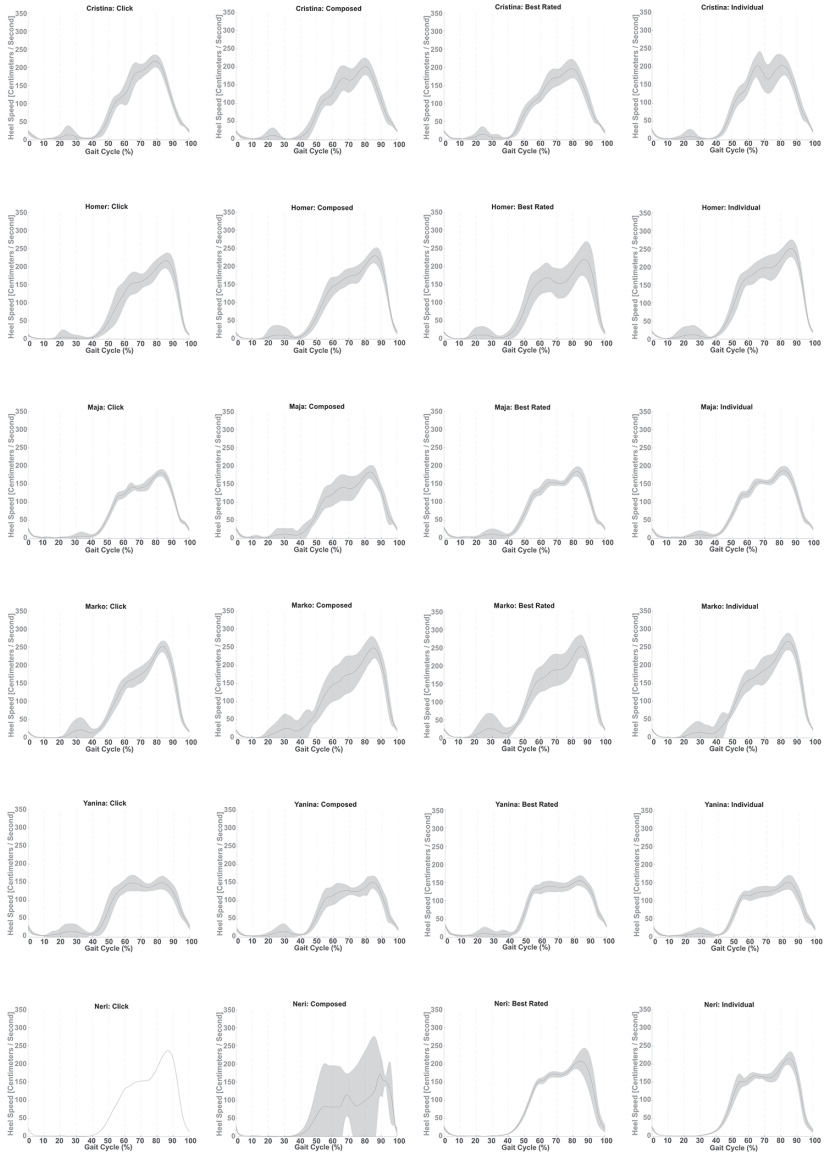

Figure 4.14 Forward step gait cycle with heel speed detection of the six dancers to a click track and three different musical stimuli.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

The ankle distance clearly shows if the feet are close together ("feet adjacent") or apart (see Figure 4.15). This way, it is easier to see where the acceleration in the step happens in relation to the phase in the step. For instance,

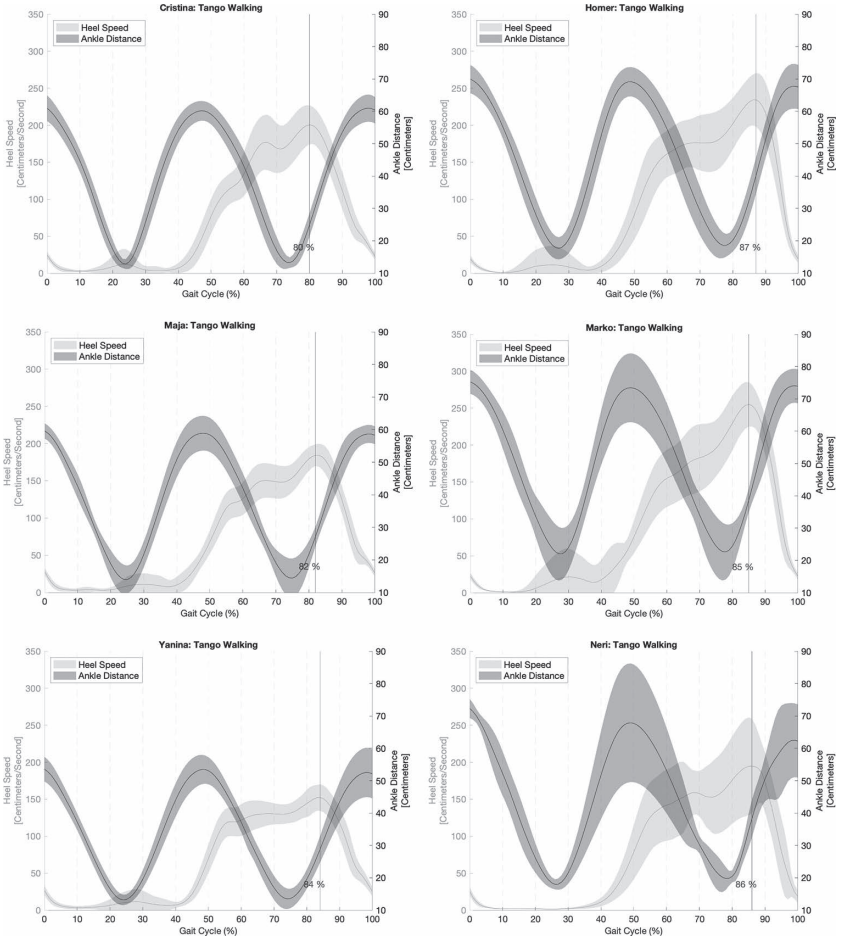

Figure 4.15 Forward step heel speed and ankle distance averaged over three musical stimuli of the six dancers. When the darker gray line (ankle distance) reaches its maximum, the feet are the maximum distance apart; when the line reaches its minimum, the feet are the minimum distance apart.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

we see that in all dancers' gaits, the heel moves fastest shortly after the "foot adjacent" moment, which is when the feet are the closest.

To understand how these shapes are specific to tango dancing, we need to compare them to regular walking (no audio stimulus).[83] Due to an unfortunate mistake in data storage, we lost the regular walking recordings of Homer and Cristina. The following figure shows the difference in heel speed combined with ankle distance between regular walking and tango walking of Maja, Marko, Yanina, and Neri.

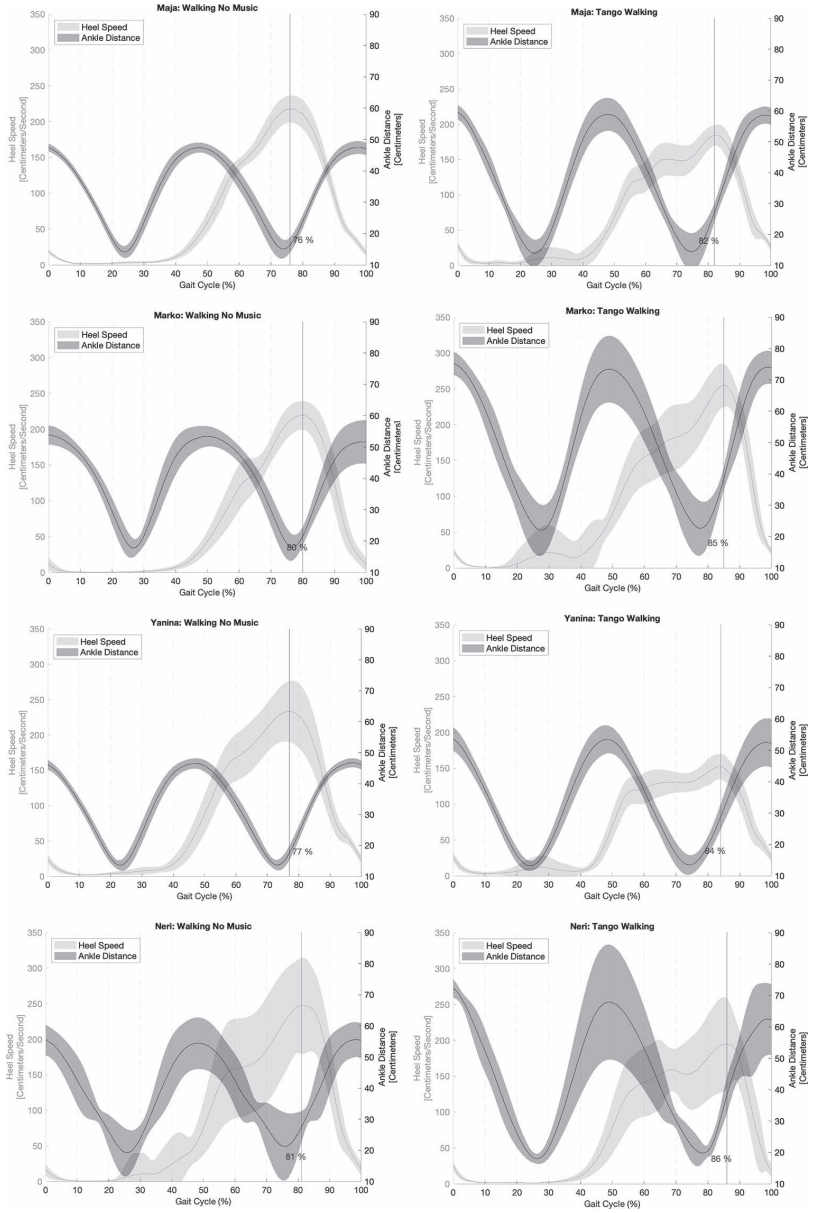

Figure 4.16 Comparison of regular walking (left) and tango walking (right). Heel speed in combination with ankle distance as measured on Maja, Marko, Yanina, and Neri. The vertical lines show the maxima of each mean in heel speed, indicating the point within the gait cycle at which acceleration turns into deceleration.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

The regular walking graph contours for heel speed of the four dancers are within the norm of heel speed in walking (Winter 1992, 49). Most importantly, the acceleration is not constant but slows down shortly before and when the free leg passes the standing leg, speeding up again until reaching the peak and slowing down before the next contact with the floor (initial contact) is reached. In addition, the deceleration time is much shorter than the acceleration time. In comparison with the heel speed graph contour in tango dancing, we see an obvious difference in the velocity distribution. While one clear main peak in the graph is apparent for all dancers in regular walking, the plot for tango walking is much more irregular. There are obvious differences between the regular walking of the four dancers. Since there is not one typical graph contour for all the dancers, general assumptions are impossible. However, one obvious difference is that the peak in the heel speed graph—that is, the point where acceleration turns into deceleration—occurs at a later point in the gait cycle for tango dancing (between 82 and 86%) than the regular walking gait (between 76 and 81%). This means that the free foot does not swing "naturally" using the initial impulse. Instead, after the initial impulse, the dancers actively control the speed of the free leg, slowing it down toward the second initial contact and distributing the speed more constantly over a longer time within the swing phase.

One difference observed from the measured ankle distance is that all the dancers take larger steps when walking in tango; this is clear from the absolute numbers of the maximum ankle distance. In addition, the peak of the ankle distance graph is much steeper, which means that the dancers spend much less time with the weight distributed on both legs; instead, they shift the weight and bring their legs together again as quickly as possible. This coincides with tango teaching that puts an emphasis on "action readiness" as explained earlier, which is a given if the weight of the dancer is clearly on just one leg.[84]

Important insights we have gained so far are that dancers take larger steps in tango walking than in regular walking and they control the speed of the free leg actively instead of using the initial swing impulse.

The question remains whether there are other elements of the gait that show even more significant differences between regular walking and tango walking. To answer it, we added an analysis of several more movement features that are relevant in gait analysis: lateral pelvic tilt, knee angle, and root acceleration.

Lateral Pelvic Tilt

I have described how dancers place their feet on two converging lines of trajectory in their tango walking (see Figure 4.2). This, of course, changes

the movement patterns as well and gives the whole body a different shape in walking. The free leg swings around the standing leg in a half circle and is placed almost in front of it. To achieve this, the hips become active. In any type of gait, the hips are active in three planes; in other words, they rotate in three ways: around one vertical axis and the two horizontal axes, one sagittal, and one frontal (Levine et al. 2012, 54). These movements influence each other and shape the movement of the leg in relation to the torso. In our measurements of the hips, we ignored two of these axes and focused on the frontal horizontal axis to capture the lateral pelvic tilt.[85]

In contrast to the previous and following analyses, lateral pelvic tilt is determined not by averaging the steps of the right and left foot into one data set but by calculating them separately to differentiate between the up-and-down movement of the left and right side.[86] Figure 4.17 shows the lateral movement of the hips measured in degrees of all six dancers in their tango walking in relation to ankle distance. The two graphs for the left and right hip are based on separate data sets. All detected gait cycles are differentiated by the starting leg (left or right) and then averaged. If the angle in the graphic is negative, the right hip is higher; a positive angle indicates the degree to which the left hip is higher.

We see that the hips actively move in a lateral up-and-down movement. We also see that the contours of the right and left hip graphs are almost the same, which indicates that none of the dancers has any irregularity in their gait concerning use of lateral hip movement. When tilt is regarded in relation to the ankle distance, it is interesting to note that the moment when the hips are horizontally aligned (which is the moment when the two graphs of the right hip and left hip cross) happens shortly after the ankle distance is at its maximum, which is after the initial contact when the transfer of weight to the front foot has started. The hips achieve the maximum tilting angle right before the maximum ankle distance is reached.

Once again, a comparison with the dancers' regular walking is illuminating (see Figure 4.18). The use of pelvic tilt in regular walking and tango walking is very different, albeit relative to the dancer. For the first time, a gender difference can be observed: the male dancers have next to no movement in their hips in regular walking but show an obvious lateral tilt in their tango dancing. If we consider that in Euro-American—and many other—cultures the convention is that male walking rarely makes use of lateral hip movement, this comes as no surprise. The surprise, however, is that the three male dancers actively use their hips in tango walking. In the female dancers, there is also an interesting difference. Although they move their hips much more in regular walking than the male dancers do, the women use their hips more in tango walking than they do in regular walking. What is of interest here is that the graph contour is different: the peak at the beginning of the lateral movement in either direction is only

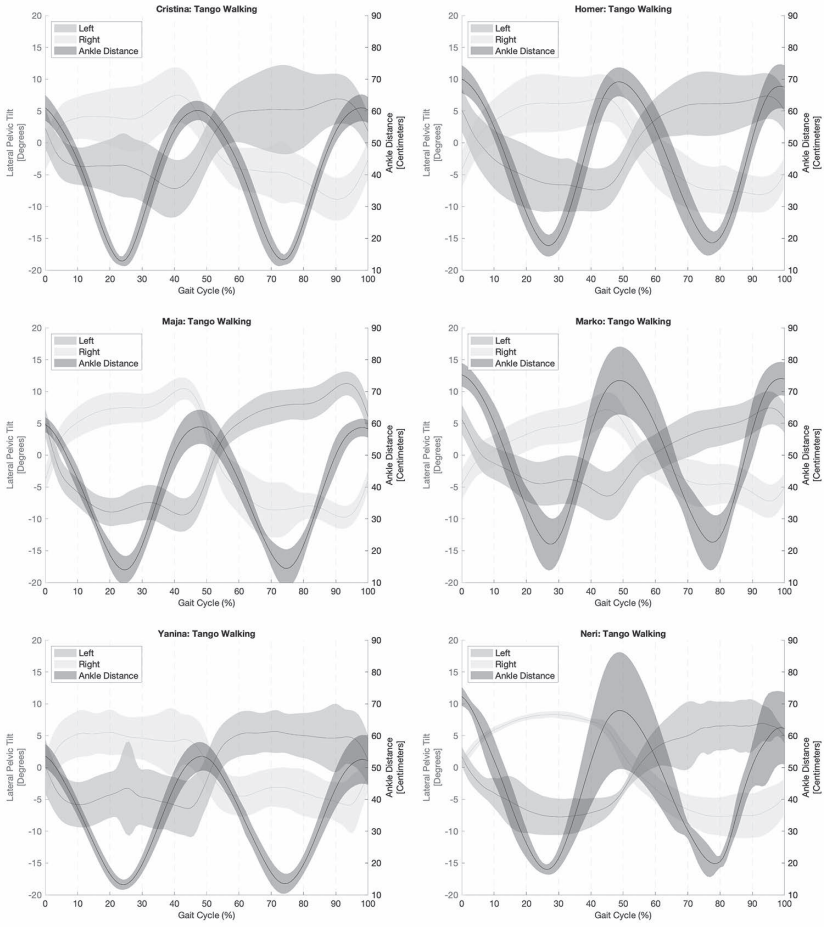

Figure 4.17 Lateral pelvic tilt in tango walking in relation to ankle distance of all six dancers, measured in degrees. Initial contact is in front with the left foot. "Right" and "left" refer to the calculated hip joint.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

present in regular walking. This means that the maximum angle is located at the moment in the gait after "toe off", when the back leg starts to close (beginning of the swing phase). Looking again at the maximum tilt in tango walking, we see that it tends to be *before* the maximum ankle distance, at the end of the swing phase. This is an indicator for a purposefully controlled movement of the hip in contrast to the regular gait. Moreover, the shapes of the tango walking graphs of the six dancers are very similar, much more so than their regular gait.

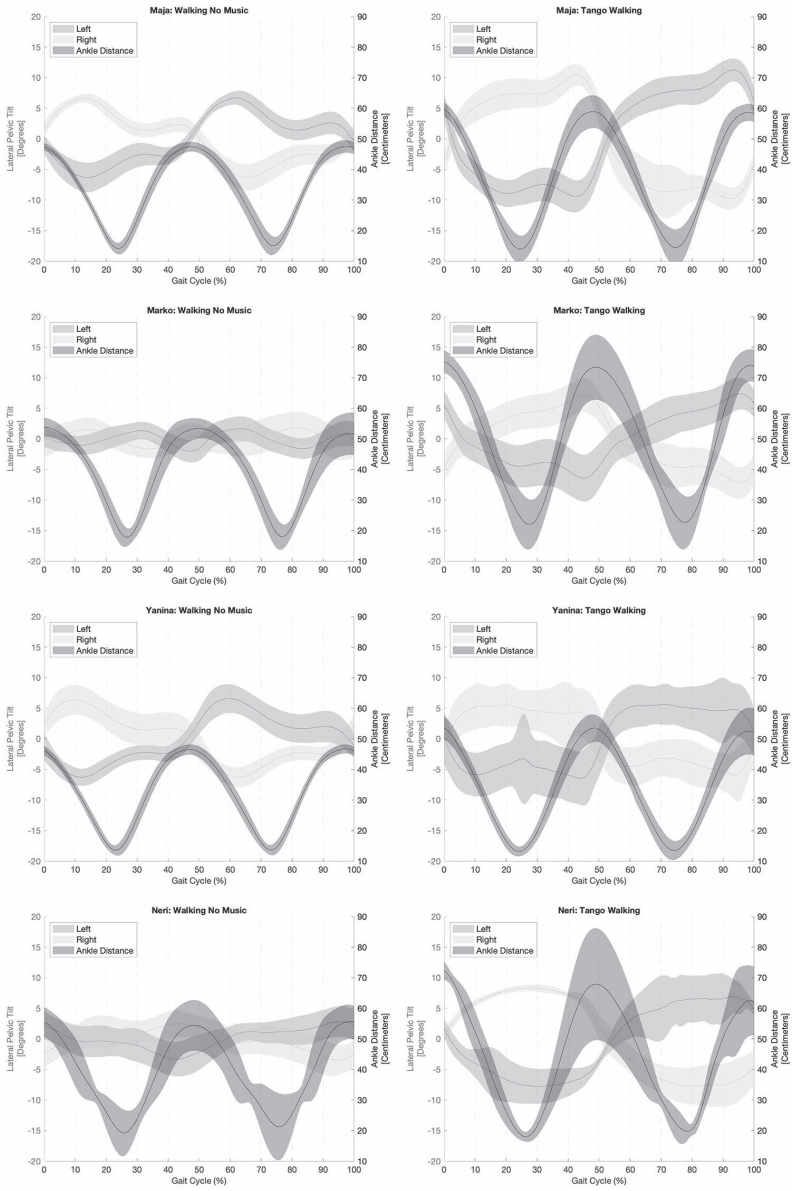

Figure 4.18 Comparison of lateral pelvic tilt between regular walking (left) and tango walking (right) of four dancers. The vertical movements of the left and right sides of the hip are shown separately and in relation to the ankle distance. Initial contact is in front with the left foot.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

The active and controlled use of a lateral pelvic tilt is particularly interesting because in tango teaching, the focus is rarely on the hips. As stated earlier, I have experienced that many teachers not only ignore hip movement but also sometimes even explicitly state that the hips should not move. Even if it is not considered to be a prominent feature of tango walking, regular hip movement that involves lateral pelvic tilt is part of the movement structure that shapes at least the aesthetics of a tango step regardless of gender and leading or following role.

Knee Angle

The next element we examined was the knee angle (see Figure 4.19). To determine knee angle, the ankle joint, "KneeOut" marker, and hip joint were taken as a reference.[87] The maximum angle is less than 180 degrees because the marker positions do not form a straight line from hip to ankle. As a result, values of 160 degrees and higher indicate a straight leg. We see that the dancers all have a long straight leg phase, basically for the entire duration that the foot is on the floor. Only when the leg is in the swing phase—in other words, when it is moving—is the knee bent. In all the dancers' knee movements, a slight peak occurs shortly before the transfer of weight. This is the only time the dancers lock their knees. As soon as the weight has been distributed mostly over the standing leg, the knee is straight but relaxed.

In comparison with the regular walking (Figure 4.20), the use of the knee does not appear to differ much. The only obvious difference is that all dancers except Yanina bend their knee slightly more when swinging the leg in tango walking. The reason for this is twofold. First, the lateral hip movement indicates that the hip of the moving leg goes down in the swing phase. To compensate for that, the knee needs to bend more. Furthermore, the thigh is lifted higher than in regular walking to allow more space for the free foot in relation to the floor when it passes the standing leg, resulting in a larger knee angle. As seen in the lateral pelvic tilt analysis, Yanina uses her hips the least of all the dancers, which might explain why her knee angle in the swing phase is not larger. Interestingly, Neri never straightens his legs completely; he walks with both legs slightly bent at all times. However, his peak is particularly high when he starts the forward step, which indicates that his focus is on stretching the leg to the front but bending it again as soon as he starts to transfer his weight.

In teaching situations, tango dancers often direct their students' attention to stretching their legs as part of proper walking technique. The most significant moment of stretching occurs when the free leg is stretching forward or backward at the beginning of a step. In the rest of the step, the most important feature is that the knee remains stable at one angle and bends properly in the swing phase. Altogether, the difference in knee angle

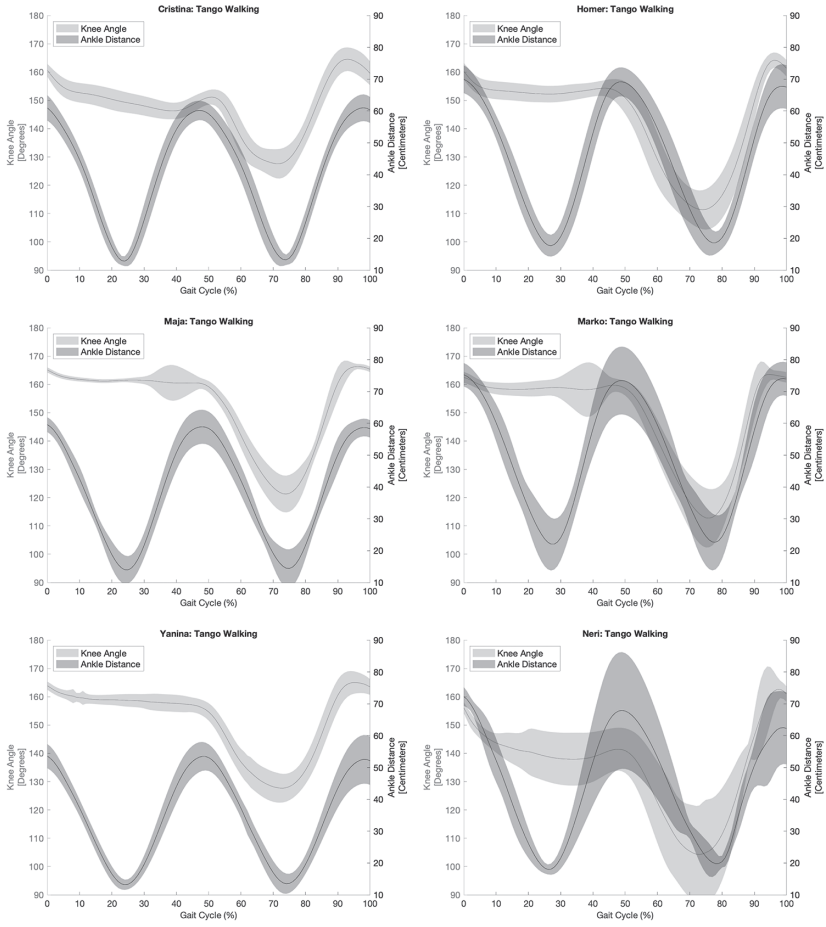

Figure 4.19 Knee angle in relation to ankle distance in tango walking of all six dancers.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

between regular walking and tango walking is minor compared to the other features (lateral pelvic tilt, ankle distance) examined so far.

Root Speed

Finally, we examined root speed.[88] Root speed measures the velocity at which the torso moves through space on a horizontal level. We did not measure the way the root speed is controlled. Force plates would have been needed to measure the transfer of weight and force applied in the steps. Therefore, we can only look at the resulting movement, not the way it is carried out.

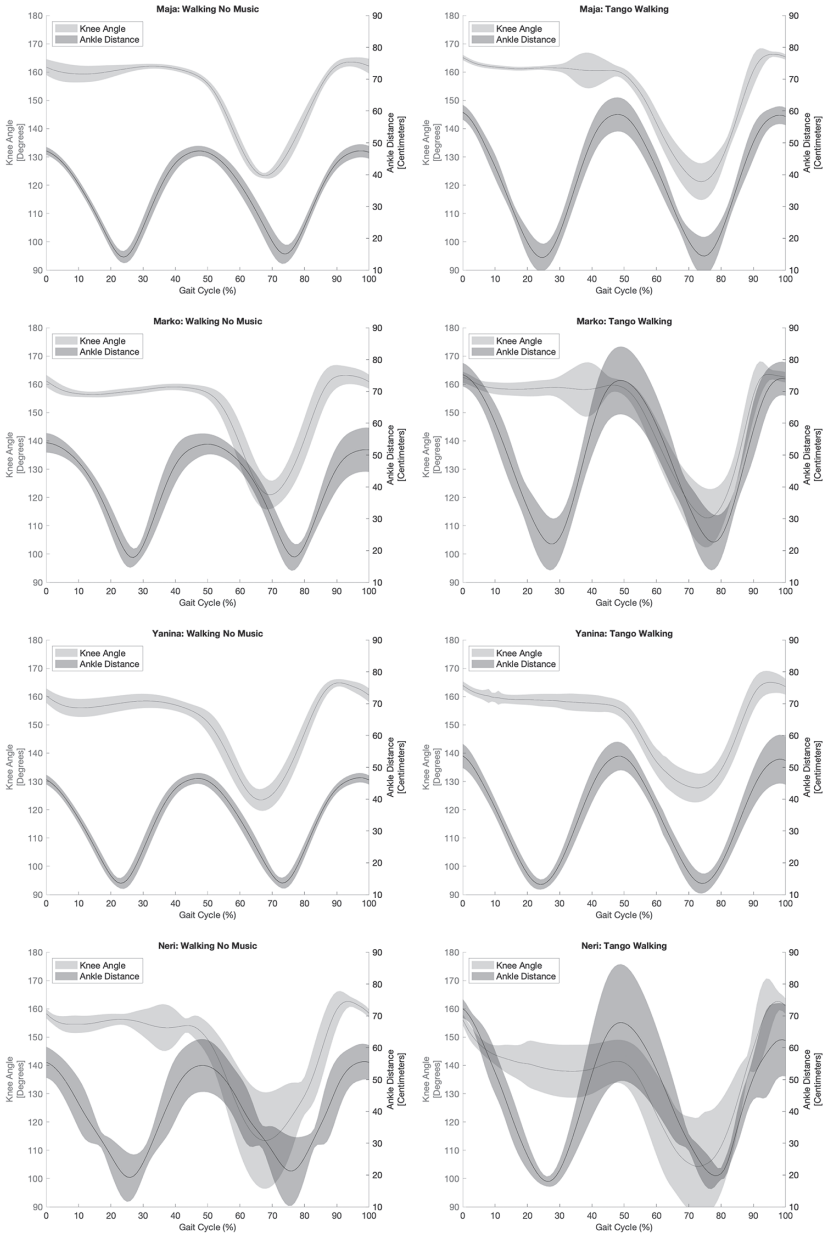

Figure 4.20 Knee angle in relation to ankle distance of four dancers, comparison of regular walking (left) and tango walking (right).

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

In regular walking, there is a constant transfer between kinetic and potential energy, most obviously in the torso (also called "trunk" in gait analysis). The potential energy is at its highest when ankle distance is the smallest, that is, when the feet are adjacent. The root has the highest kinetic energy when the ankles are the furthest apart (Levine et al. 2012, 53). This coincides with the speed; the lower the velocity, the higher the potential energy. Because of this alternation between potential and kinetic energy, the root speed regularly changes within one gait cycle from slower when the feet are adjacent to faster when the ankle distance is the greatest.

The same basic pattern occurs in tango walking: the root speed changes from fast to slow in close connection with the ankle distance. This effect is clearly visible in the following Figure 4.21.

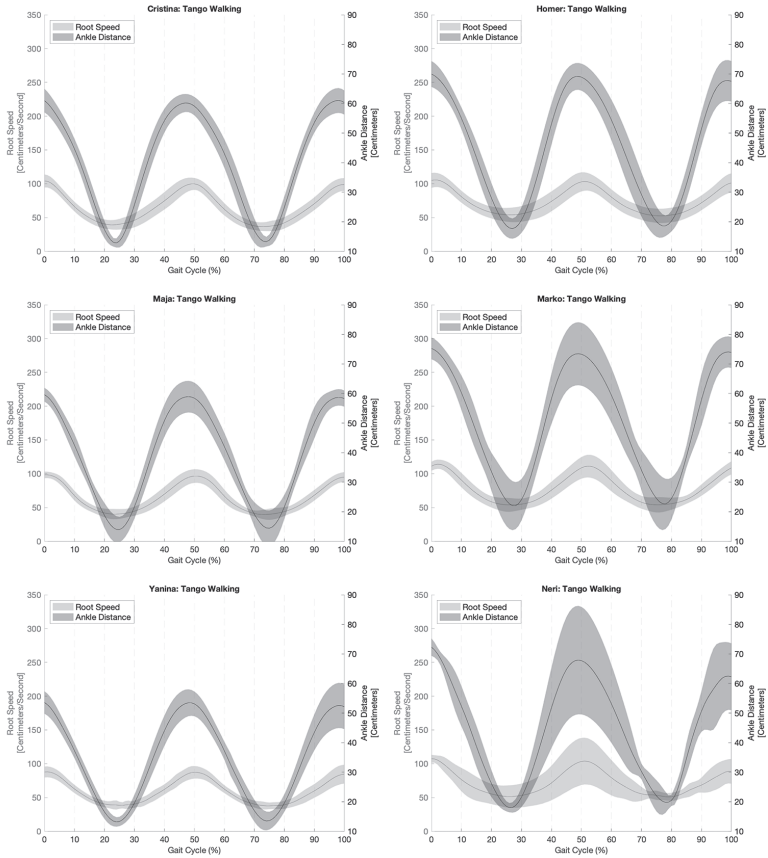

Figure 4.21 Root speed in relation to ankle distance of all six tango dancers.
Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

I was interested to see whether the velocity is more varied in tango walking than in regular walking. In the figures that compare root speed in both ways of walking (Figure 4.22), the velocity is, in fact, much more varied in tango walking. This means that dancers actively change the speed at which they move forward. The maximum speed still coincides with the greatest ankle distance as in regular walking and the minimum speed with the smallest ankle distance, but the range between the highest and lowest root speed of each dancer individually differs much more in tango walking.

I consider the greater variations in root speed one of the most significant features that differentiate tango walking from regular walking. It gives any step a stronger visual impulse, particularly during the moment of acceleration while the weight is shifted. I argue that the subdivision of a step into an impulsive acceleration followed by a strong deceleration, as seen in the root speed, is linked to a basic musical concept in tango, the *arrastre*. The acceleration part of the step mirrors the musical anticipation toward the beat, while the deceleration and abrupt slowing down toward the stance phase parallel the strong and often short impulse on the first beat.

All the analyzed features (ankle distance, heel speed, knee angle, lateral pelvic tilt, and root speed) exhibit a difference between regular walking and tango walking. There is also a clear difference between the individual dancers in regular gait and in tango walking. In most cases, the way the individual gait changes between regular walking and tango walking is similar, with few exceptions. The sample here is too small to draw any general conclusions about a particular tango style; by focusing on six representative dancers, the most we can do is to detect individual tango gait styles and carefully draw general conclusions about tango walking technique.

Combining all analysis, we clearly see that the way the free leg moves is actively controlled at all phases of the gait. The only outcome that principally differs from what tango teachers verbalize is the use of the hips, which are actively moved in tango walking—by male dancers most obviously—in contrast to the regular gait. What we have definitely gained from detailed movement analysis is a better understanding of what distinguishes tango walking from regular walking that goes beyond metaphors and descriptions.

Thus, the main elements identified as being essential for tango walking are: (1) larger steps relative to regular walking, (2) controlled movement of the free leg, (3) full stretching of the front leg before the weight is shifted, (4) active use of lateral hip movement by both male and female dancers, (5) stronger acceleration and deceleration of the root speed relative to regular walking.

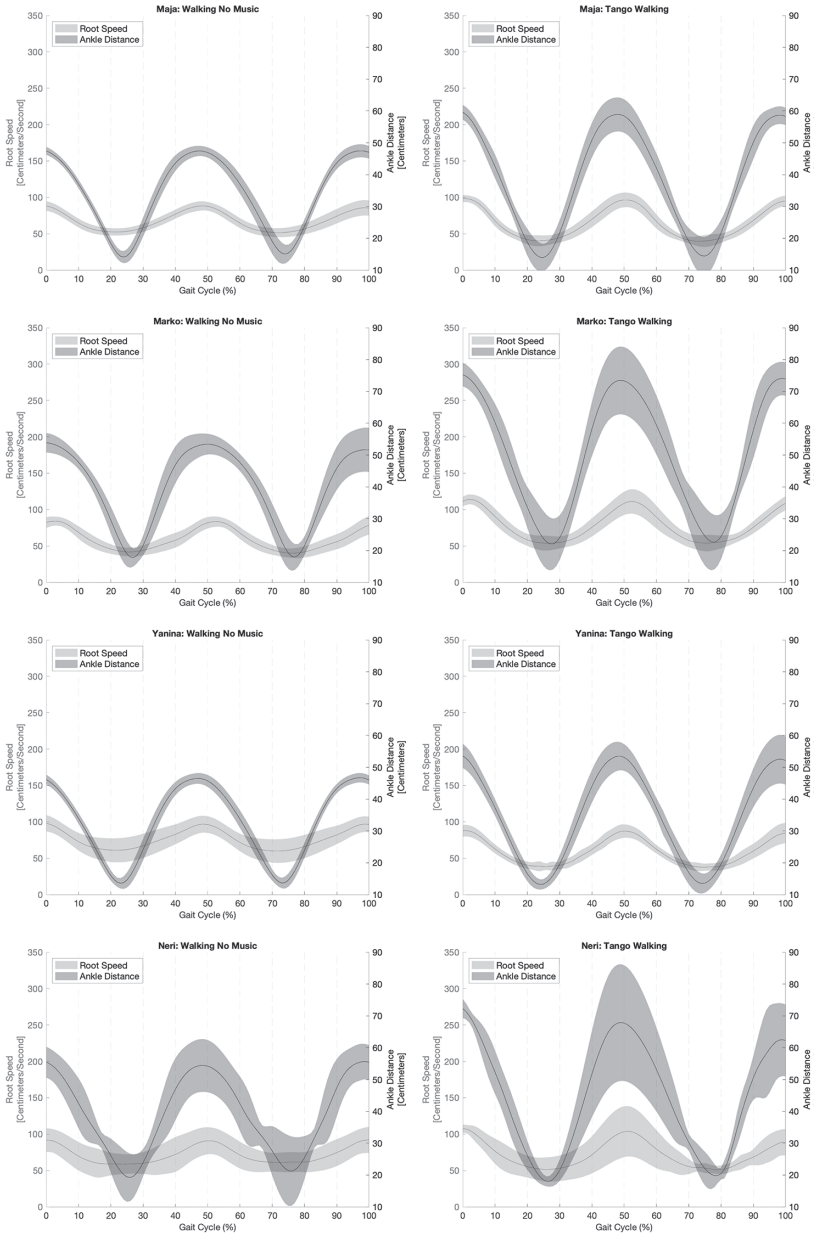

Figure 4.22 Root speed in relation to ankle distance of four dancers, comparison of regular walking (left) and tango walking (right).

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

Tango Backward Steps

Half of the tango dancers walk backward most of the time. It is the "following" half, and they practice their backward steps just as much, if not more, than their forward steps. Therefore, a look at backward steps[89] is important if one wants a complete picture of tango dancing. For this data set, I decided to focus solely on the followers because despite their good knowledge of the followers' part, the leaders we worked with are simply not as well-trained as the followers, and my aim is to detect not dancing skill but the fundamentals of backward step technique. I chose to use the mocap material from the couples dancing to all four audio stimuli because the followers took many more backward steps in these recordings than in individual walking recordings. Furthermore, their backward steps in couple dancing represent the actual movement that is practiced on the dance floor.[90] I will also not compare tango backward steps with "regular walking", because backward steps are not part of everyday walking movements. In the following section, I examine the same features as with the forward steps: ankle distance, heel speed, lateral pelvic tilt, knee angle, and root speed.

The heel speed[91] in relation to ankle distance provides a general impression of the movement. In the top row of Figure 4.23, we see that the reach of the steps in absolute numbers is similar to the forward steps of the three dancers. It is also apparent that the contours of the three dancers' heel speed graphs are almost the same, which is an indicator that backward step technique is less "individual" than forward step technique.

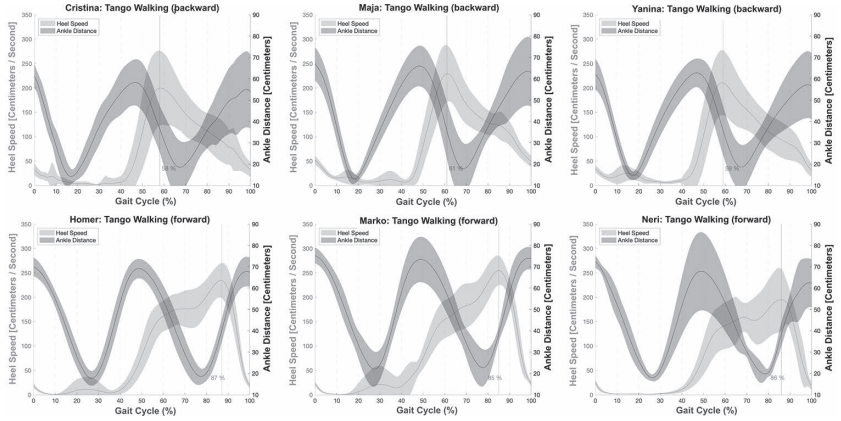

Figure 4.23 Heel speed and ankle distance of the three followers' backward steps (upper row). The bottom row displays the respective leaders' forward steps from the single recordings.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

Compared to the forward step, the graph contour in the swing phase is almost reversed. The free leg starts to move with a strong acceleration; the front leg is pulled back to the standing leg as quickly as possible, slowing down shortly before passing the standing leg and extending to the back. If the dancers walk backward, they must mirror the movements of their partners, who are walking forward. To show how the backward steps relate to the forward steps, I added the heel speed and ankle distance graphics of the leaders to the backward steps of the respective followers in Figure 4.23 (bottom row). We see that the time when the follower's free leg moves the fastest does not coincide with the time the leader's leg moves the fastest. Instead, the followers start their movements with a fast movement, the "projecting" of the free leg, which is exactly what tango teachers focus on when instructing students on how to walk backward properly. The simple reason is that followers have to make space as quickly as possible for the leader's leg, which will occupy the same space on the floor shortly after the follower has moved away. A foot that is not moved away fast enough runs the risk of being trampled on. Once the front leg has been pulled back, the speed slows down almost constantly, until the foot reaches the next initial contact.

Because of the difference in heel speed between forward steps and backward steps, the distance between the toes of the leader and the follower changes over time. This is clearly visible in the mocap recordings when the toe markers are regarded. When the dancers stand on their feet, their toes are almost in front of each other. Due to the higher speed of the follower's heel (free foot), the distance then becomes much greater, and both feet move at about the same speed for a while. In the last phase of the swing, the leader gets closer to the follower's foot again by speeding up, thereby reducing the toe distance back to the small distance observed while standing.

The mocap data of the heel speed and the visual representation of both dancers' feet in combination clearly show how followers are able to make room for the leaders by quickly pulling their front leg toward their standing leg and how this practicality also contributes to a walking aesthetic.

Lateral Pelvic Tilt

In the backward steps, the hips actively tilt laterally (see Figure 4.24). Compared to the forward steps, the angle of the lateral pelvic tilt is even larger. The three followers do not suppress hip movements and instead incorporate the lateral pelvic tilt into their tango walking as an integral part. There is a difference between the three dancers in the timing of hip tilt in relation to the leg movement that is visible in the ankle distance. In general, the hip of the standing leg is higher than that of the free leg and reaches a peak when the feet are the closest.

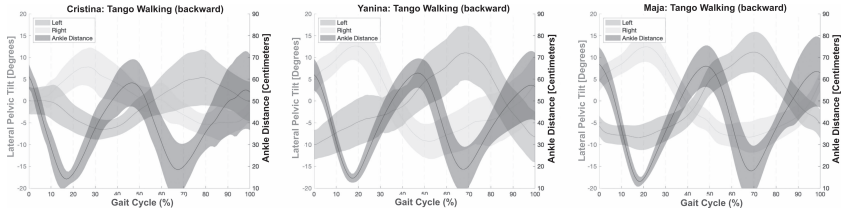

Figure 4.24 Lateral pelvic tilt and ankle distance of the three followers' backward steps from the "couple walking" recordings. The gait cycle starts with the right foot extended to the back; "right" and "left" refer to the hips.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

The moment when the hips are straight (when the graphs of right hip and left hip cross) in Maja and Yanina's steps coincides with the moment when the weight is transferred to the back leg and the front leg is fully stretched.[92] In contrast, Cristina's hips are straight when the front leg is pulled back; however, the difference is not significant enough to exemplify a different technique.

Altogether, the lateral pelvic tilt is very similar to the forward steps, which means that the hips are neither blocked and kept straight nor moved in a prominent and visually noticeable way.

Knee Angle

The graph shape of the knee angle in backward steps shows no phase during which the leg is stretched for a longer time; instead, it is stretched and bent alternately. We see two peaks of straight legs: the first almost coinciding (i.e., slightly later) with the moment before the front leg is pulled back, and the second when the leg is stretched to the back shortly before the weight is transferred. In contrast to the forward steps, the dancers do not stretch the standing leg while closing it. As soon as the weight rests on one leg, it is bent and continues to bend further while the other leg is extended.

If a person stands on a bent knee, the extended leg can reach further because the angle between the standing leg and the extended leg is larger the closer the hips are to the floor. Followers use this principle to reach even further in the backward step: the further down, the wider the reach. Roughly described, the anatomical reason for this is that because the hips can be bent to the anterior (i.e., the leg may be lifted to the front without any tilting of the hip) but not to the posterior (the hips always tilt when the leg is lifted to the back), the free leg can reach further to the front than to the back.

This compensation is visible in the first valley of the knee angle graph. It coincides with the moment before the weight is shifted to the back, which

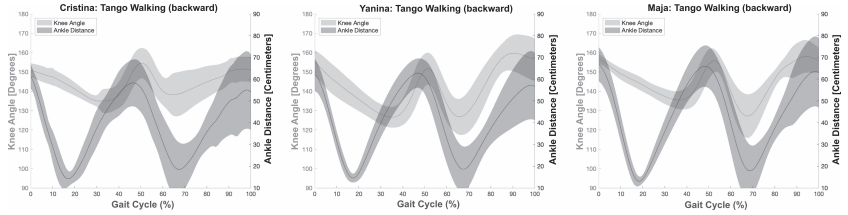

Figure 4.25 Knee angle in relation to ankle distance of the three followers' backward steps from the "couple walking" recordings.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

is when the followers bend their knee more to take a larger step to match the step length of the leaders. As soon as the weight is transferred, the bent leg is straightened. The second valley coincides with the moving leg passing the standing leg. The reason the free leg bends at this moment is the same as in the forward steps. The leg that passes the standing leg is bent more to give the free foot space above the floor; this is achieved by lifting the thigh slightly and bending the knee at the same time. In addition, the dancers fully extend their back leg shortly before shifting their weight, which is visible in the second peak. They also extend the front leg fully before closing. This also helps them gain more reach, because a leg that is as straight as possible has the furthest reach.

Summing up, the knees are more active in the backward steps than they are in the forward steps. The reason is based on human anatomy, which allows larger forward steps than backward steps. Tango dancers compensate by bending the knee more and extending the moving leg as much as possible.

Root Speed

Not surprisingly, the root speed in the backward steps exhibits the same patterns as that of the forward steps. We detected more acceleration and deceleration in root speed in the forward steps, which indicates stronger impulses forward at the beginning of a step compared to regular walking. The same variations in root speed are detectable in the backward steps because followers need to match the speed of the leaders perfectly to keep the distance between them stable (in open embrace) or stay properly connected at chest level (in close embrace).

Altogether, the backward steps have the same features as the forward steps: active use of the hips in a lateral tilt, larger steps, and stronger changes in root speed than in regular walking. The larger steps and the changes in velocity are closely related to walking as a couple: the followers must match the root speed as well as the step length of the leaders.

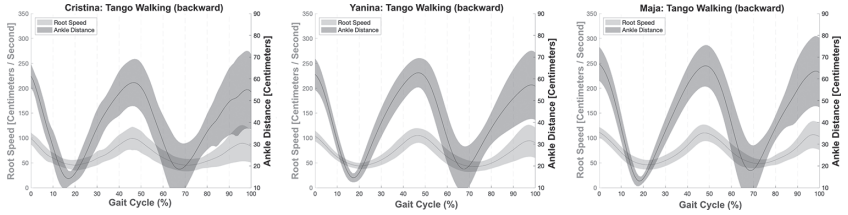

Figure 4.26 Root speed in relation to ankle distance of the three followers' backward steps from the "couple walking" recordings.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

Two features are significantly different compared to tango forward steps: knee angle and heel speed. The knee angle clearly shows that the knees are actively used to gain further reach by extending the leg completely when stretching to the back and by bending the standing leg to increase the reach of the extended leg even further. Unnecessary in the forward steps, this technique is required to obtain the same—larger—reach in the steps. Finally, the heel speed starts with the high-tempo part and ends with the slower one, a reversal of the pattern in the forward step. This shows that the followers quickly pull back their front leg and slow down at a later point to make space for the leaders' forward step.

To walk harmoniously as a couple, the velocity and the step size of the partner must be matched. This "matching technique" is clearly detectable in the backward steps through a quite complex interplay of bending the knees further to obtain a similar reach as in a forward step, controlling the heel speed to make room for the leader's feet, and keeping the same root speed as that of the leader. This attempt to understand the separate features that define a tango backward step indicates how complex the technique is in a seemingly simple backward step. In addition, it reveals that walking aesthetics in the backward step are mainly caused by the necessity to match the leader's forward step aesthetics.

Pivoting Technique: Dissociation in the Ocho

Pivots are the second fundamental movement that is the basis of all tango dancing. Pivots are combined with steps into more complex movement sequences, some of which have been given names and become standard movement repertoire. The simplest combination of a step and a pivot is the *ocho*. *Ocho* is Spanish for "eight", and the term refers to the imagined pattern the dancer draws on the floor while doing an *ocho*. There are two basic *ocho* variants, the *ocho atrás* (backward *ocho*) and the *ocho adelante* (forward *ocho*). In the mocap sessions, we recorded this step–pivot sequence to understand how dancers start to pivot coming out of a step,

which is a very common movement in the tango movement repertoire. The *ocho* recordings were done without any audio stimulus, focusing on the technique itself. I will first explain the *ocho* movements and then present the mocap data regarding the dissociation technique and the timing of the movement based on the analysis of knee angle, lateral pelvic tilt, and the relation between the shoulder line and the hip line.

Both *ocho* variants start with a step and continue with a pivot, which is then repeated by the other leg to the other side. The *ocho atrás* starts with a backward step; the *ocho adelante* starts with a forward step. After examining the *ocho atrás*, I will compare it with the *ocho adelante*.

Ocho Atrás

In the *ocho atrás*, the dancer starts in a dissociated position, with the upper body oriented toward the partner (in Figure 4.27 the wall) and the lower body turned to the outward side of the couple. The *ocho atrás* starts with the extension of the leg that is on the outside of the couple. The leg is extended to the back, and the weight shifted onto the back foot. When the weight has been transferred completely, the front leg is pulled back to the standing leg but remains free of any weight. The dancer now pivots almost 180 degrees on the ball of the foot of the standing leg. The whole movement is repeated with the other leg to the other side. In the basic (exercise) version, the dancer needs to stay within the same space and cannot move forward, backward, or to the side. Instead, the upper body of the dancer needs to remain always facing and in alignment with the partner. This is only possible if the dancer releases the dissociation while pivoting and starts to dissociate in the other direction immediately afterward so that the second backward step is carried out on the same floor path as the first one, but in the opposite direction.

Because of this extreme use of dissociation, the *ocho* is a perfect motif for examining pivot and dissociation technique. More concretely, we wanted to understand three things: first, which parts of the body initiate and carry out the dissociation; second, how the pivot is carried out; and third, how the dissociation is timed in relation to the transition from step to pivot. To this end, we looked at the use of the knees in the step and the pivot (knee

Figure 4.27 Ocho atrás presented by Yanina Quiñones.
Source: Photographs by Neri Píliu.

angle) and the use of the hips (lateral pelvic tilt). The selection of analyzed features was informed by the dancers' knowledge of the technique and a reflection of the learning and teaching processes.

For the *ocho*, we did not average movements as in the step analysis but searched for a sequence within the *ocho* recordings where the dancers repeated *ochos* several times.[93] The graphs show this exact sequence. Because the dancers may have started with a different leg, the starting leg (left or right) is explicitly indicated in the graph. As in the step analysis, the point of reference that gives us an impression of the location of the step in the graphs is the ankle distance. In the following section, the ankle distance is always added to the analyzed feature in the graphical data visualization as a reference.

Knee Angle and Ankle Distance

Figure 4.28 shows the relation of ankle distance to knee angle of all six dancers. The feet are closed when the graph shows a valley and are furthest apart when the graph shows a peak. The progression of ankle distance over time of all the dancers reveals that they have stable step lengths and move continuously in their *ochos*. The pivot happens while the ankles are close together, and the beginning of the transfer of weight happens when the feet are furthest apart.

The graph of the ankle distance has a clear peak when the ankles are the most distant to each other, but there are several, diverse valleys when the ankles are the closest. This can be explained by the turning movement in which the free leg does not remain perfectly still in relation to the standing/rotating leg.

The knee angle of both legs is much lower when the ankles are close together, which means that the dancers pivot with their knees slightly bent.[94] This is different, for instance, from classical ballet technique, where the standing leg is stretched and the knee is locked during turns.[95] The legs are nearly fully extended between pivots, which is indicated by the small steep peak right at the greatest ankle distance. We also see that the knee of the free leg is sometimes even more bent than the standing leg in the pivot, which is done to give the free leg more space off the floor.[96] It is possible to bend the free leg more than the standing leg and still have the ankles as close together as possible if the thigh of the free leg is slightly lifted.

Turning with bent knees is, in fact, more difficult than turning with a stretched leg, because the axis from the pivoting point (balls of one foot) through the leg and torso to the head is less stable. The reason for turning in this slight knee bend is therefore not to make turning easier. There is another reason for this technique: turning on a stretched leg lifts the whole body up, which causes a vertical up–down movement in the *ocho* (step phase down, pivot phase up). As explained earlier, the aesthetic aim

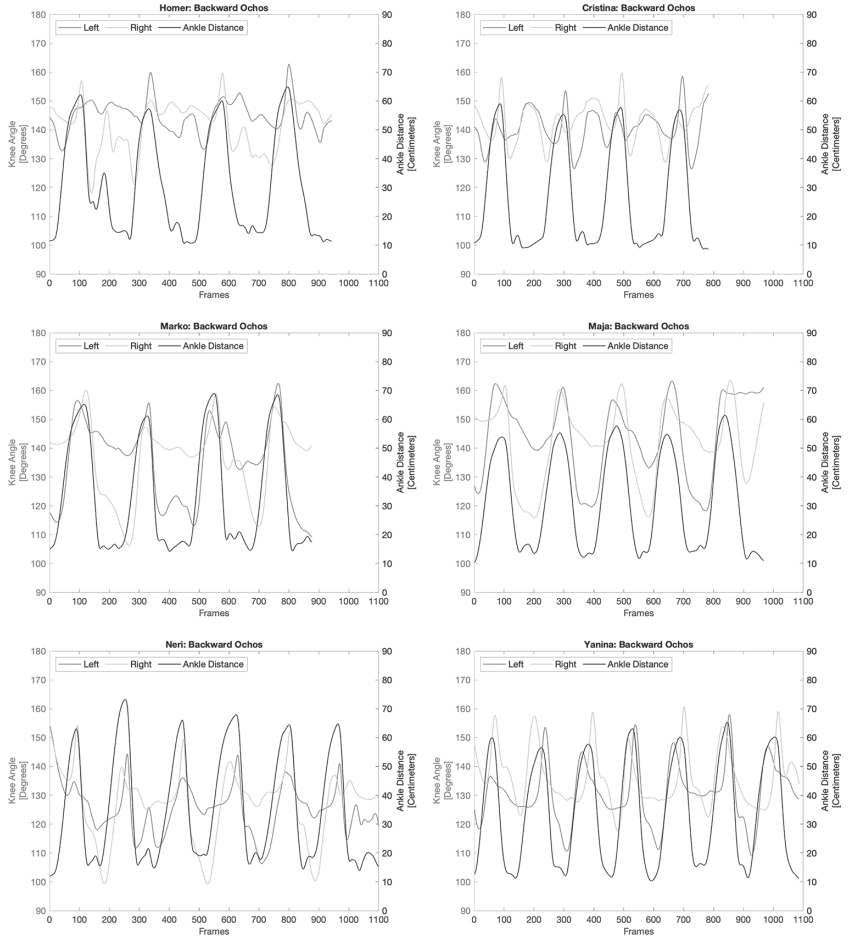

Figure 4.28 Ankle distance in relation to knee angle in *ocho atrás* of all six dancers. Since all dancers start with a backward step with the right leg, the first pivot is also on the right leg. "Left" and "right" refer to the legs. The black line indicates the ankle distance, dark gray and light gray lines the knee angles.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

of tango movement is to remain stable in a horizontal plane. In the *ocho*, dancers achieve this by bending their knees while pivoting.

Lateral Pelvic Tilt

We have already examined the lateral pelvic tilt in tango walking and found that the hips are actively used by dancers regardless of role and gender, in forward steps and in backward steps, and significantly more so

than in regular steps. The question is whether the dancers keep their hips still while pivoting or if hip movement occurs during either the pivot or the transfer from step to pivot and vice versa.

The movement of the hips in *ocho atrás* is different from both regular walking and tango walking. In tango walking, the hips are on one level and do not tilt laterally in the middle of the step, when the ankle distance

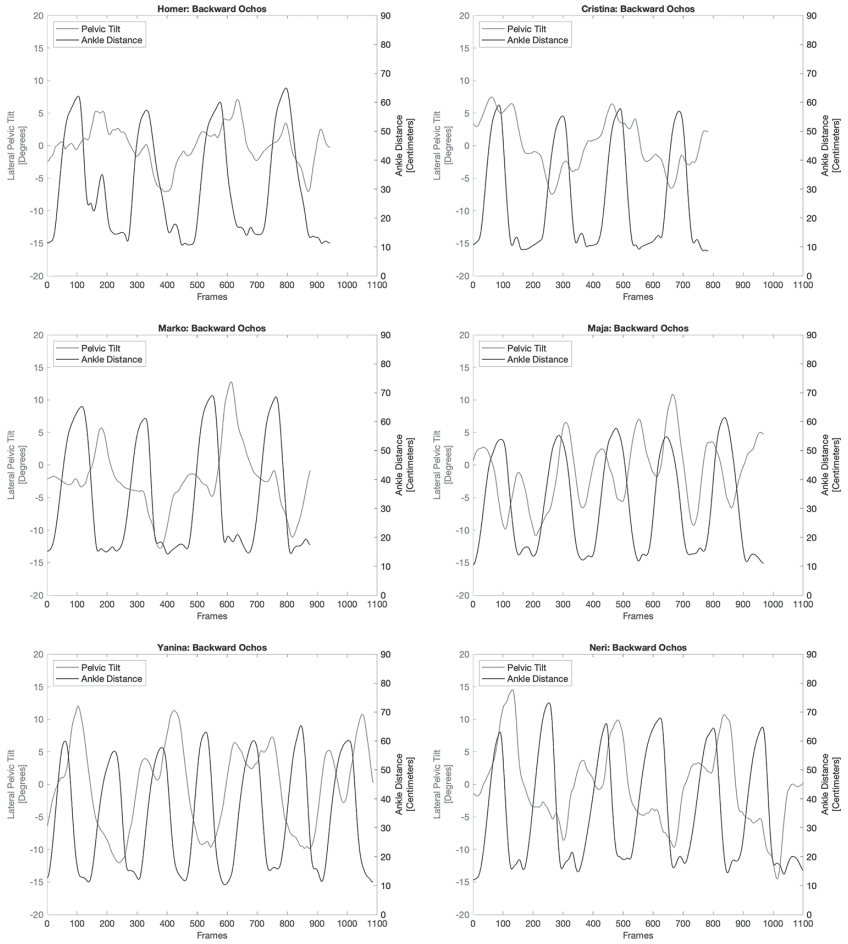

Figure 4.29 Lateral pelvic tilt in relation to ankle distance in the *ocho atrás* of all six dancers. All dancers start with the right leg to the back. Peaks in the gray line show the hip tilting to the right (right side lower than left side), a valley shows the hip tilting to the left (left side lower than right side), and the 0 represents the normal, even hip position.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

is the greatest, but tilt the most when the ankles are closer together. In the backward *ocho*, a constant movement with diverse peaks is visible. It is obvious that the hip is used by all dancers as a means of compensation or, perhaps more accurately, as a movement assisting the dissociation. Yet the way the dancers incorporate the lateral pelvic tilt reveals different individual approaches. It is easier to dissociate further if the hip of the back leg tilts downward, because this downward movement effectively gives the dissociation in the upper body more reach. Cristina, Yanina, and Neri use this technique. Maja uses her hips in yet another way. She also lets the hip of the free leg drop slightly in the backward step but lifts it up to the same level as the other while still in the step, tilting to the other side when she starts to pull back the front leg. In the pivot, she transitions through the straight position a second time. From these individual approaches to the use of the hips, we can derive only one general statement: the lateral pelvic tilt in an *ocho* step is different from that of a regular tango step because the dancers use their hips—in individual ways—to aid the dissociation.

Dissociation of the Shoulder Line and the Hip Line

We examined the movement of the shoulders in relation to the hips to better understand the dissociation technique.[97] To figure out how these two areas of the body move in relation to each other, we looked at the angle between the shoulder line[98] and the hip line.[99] For the sake of clearly communicating the following analysis, I call this angle the dissociation angle.

The dissociation within the body between the shoulder line and the hip line can be measured by calculating the angle between the two vectors on each side.[100] The difference of 40 degrees between the right and left side is explained in the graphic in Figure 4.30. The markers of the shoulders lie behind the calculated "neck", which makes the shoulder line actually a V and not a straight line. The result of this bend in the line is that 20 degrees are added on one side, while the other side starts in the straight position at –20 degrees.

In Figure 4.31, we see the change in the alignment of the hip line and shoulder line in relation to ankle distance. We see that both sides move in parallel. This is naturally the case for the hip line because the left hip cannot move separately from the right, but the shoulders could theoretically move with small differences. However, the six dancers are in such control of their upper bodies that no differences between right and left shoulder movement are detectable.

The captured movement starts from a position in which the feet are adjacent and the shoulders have already dissociated to the left. When the dancers start to do the backward step, they all dissociate further while stretching their leg to the back, reaching the peak of the dissociation shortly after the maximum ankle distance, which means that they continue

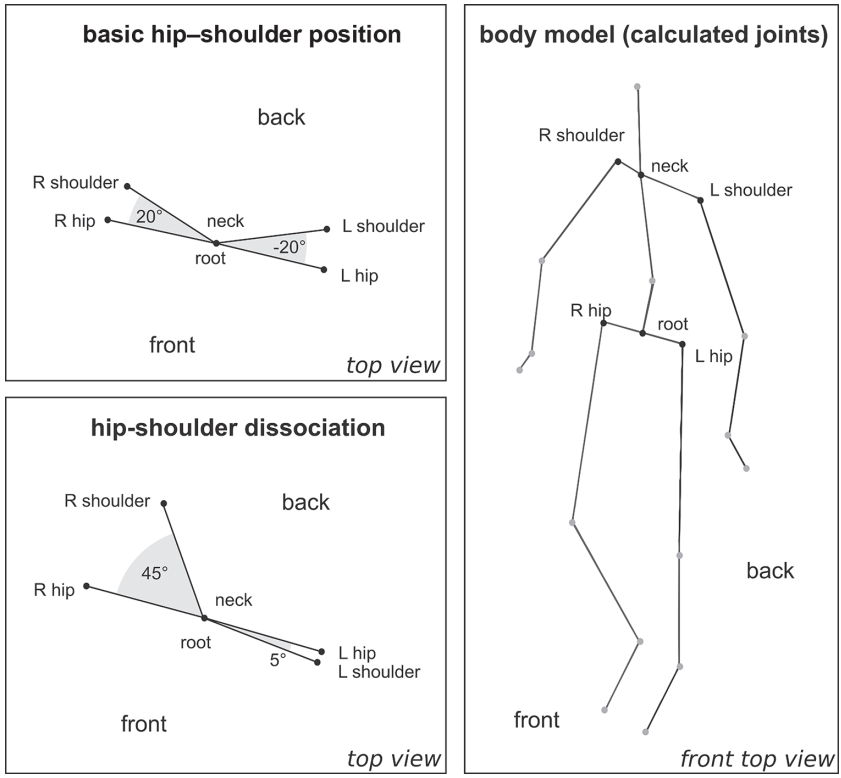

Figure 4.30 Visualization of the dissociation angle between the hip line and the shoulder line.

Source: Graphic by Kendra Stepputat.

to dissociate while transferring their weight to the back leg. All dancers start to release the dissociation before they start to pivot. The exact timing of the closing of the legs and the start of the pivot differs; some start to pivot slightly before the ankles reach the minimum (Marko, Yanina, Neri, Cristina), while others pivot exactly when the ankles are the closest together (Maja, Homer). The latter actually start pivoting shortly after the free leg has passed through the closest ankle distance and use the momentum of the leg that is pulled back to help in the turn. During the pivot, all dancers go through the straight position and use the release to continue the dissociation further in the other direction—a counterdissociation, so to speak.

In the release phase of the dissociation, clear differences are also apparent between the dancers. Some of the dissociation angle graphs show more than one peak, which means that the dissociation does not release right

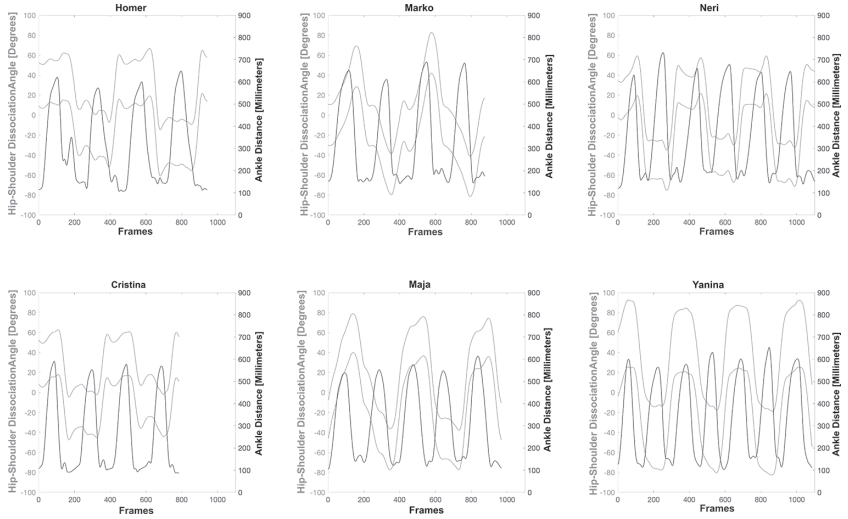

Figure 4.31 Dissociation angle between shoulder line and hip line in combination with ankle distance of all six dancers in the *ocho atrás*. The two lines that go in parallel with a 40-degree difference in angle indicate the angle of the left side of the body (lower line) and the angle of the right side of the body (upper line).

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

into the counter-dissociation but that the dancers dissociate and counter-dissociate several times (on a minimal level). Sorting the dancers by this pattern, we see a continuum from one peak (Yanina) to two peaks (Neri) and three peaks (Homer). The additional peaks indicate that the dancers briefly release their dissociation into a counterdissociation but continue to dissociate further while turning. This movement is clearly visible when the mocap recording is watched at half speed.

Tango dancers strive for a smooth transition between the step and the pivot in the *ocho*, which we see is mainly achieved by a continuous transition between dissociation and counterdissociation assisted by the use of the hips and flexibility in the knees. Controlling the transition to the degree that there is only one release moment from dissociation to counterdissociation is only possible after intensive training. This explains why the three followers, who more often execute *ocho atrás* in regular tango dancing, are much better trained in controlling the dissociation and keeping it stable into the counterdissociation.

The mocap data chosen for this analysis can clearly show important features of a simple pivot and dissociation technique. To start an *ocho*, dancers actively turn their lower body into the projected step direction and keep the upper body facing their partner. After the step throughout which

the dissociation is held, the tension is released and, at the same time, the momentum is used for the counterdissociation as the lower body turns in the new projected walking direction and the upper body remains stable.

As explained earlier, a pivot can also be initiated by the active dissociation of the upper body. In fact, all six dancers started the first *ocho* in this way. In actual partnered dancing, it is often hard to differentiate between one option and the other, and both can morph into a third option: that the upper and lower bodies turn opposite each other at the same time. In any case, once the dissociation is released, a pivot can follow.

Ocho Adelante

To further the knowledge about the pivoting technique, I will compare the insights from the *ocho atrás* with the *ocho adelante*, or the forward *ocho*. The step sequence is the same, with the main difference being that the step between pivots is done to the front and the dancers pivot toward the partner. The same features as in the *ocho atrás* are examined: knee angle, lateral pelvic tilt, and shoulder line–hip line dissociation.

The *ocho adelante* starts in a dissociated position, with the shoulders facing the partner and the hips to the side. The dancer first steps to the front with the leg that is closer to the partner. After the weight is transferred, the pivot (180 degrees) is also executed toward the partner. The movement (first step, then pivot) is repeated with the other leg until the dancer returns to the initial position (see Figure 4.32).

Knee Angle and Ankle Distance

The dancers have a stable step length in their repetitions of the *ocho adelante* (see Figure 4.33). In the forward turn, the dancers seem to have more control over their free foot while pivoting compared to the backward turn in the *ocho atrás*. This is visible from the ankle distance, which—with very few exceptions—is stable in the turn, leading to a regular shape in the graph. In the forward *ocho*, the dancers also use the technique of pulling

Figure 4.32 *Ocho adelante* presented by Yanina Quiñones, movement sequence from left to right.

Source: Photographs by Neri Píliu.

the foot close to the rotating leg while they have started rotating to gain angular momentum, which can be observed in the mocap recordings and is visible in that the ankle distance is never stable: as soon as the ankles are the closest together, the ankle distance starts to become larger again (see also the dissociation analysis that follows).

The use of the knees is similar to their use in the backward *ocho*. All dancers turn with their knees bent and bend the free leg even more to keep the ankles close together, lifting the free leg slightly up by the thigh so there

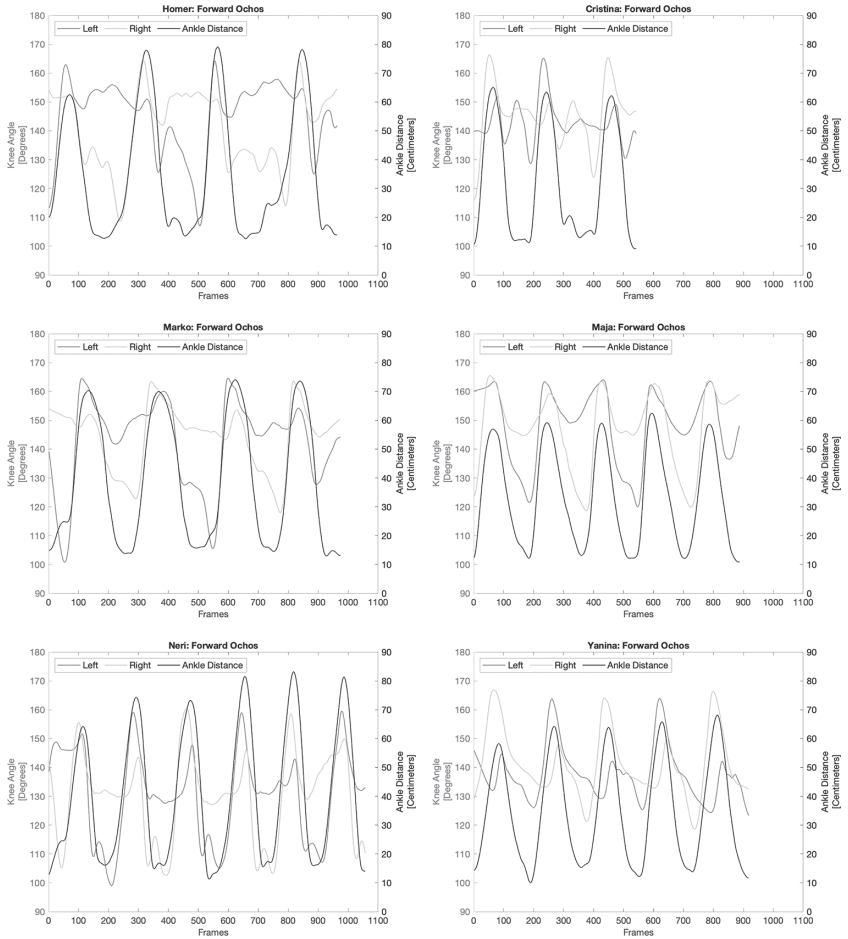

Figure 4.33 *Ocho adelante* ankle distance and knee angle. In this recording, Cristina, Maja, and Yanina start with the left leg; Homer, Marko, and Neri with the right leg. "Left" and "right" refer to legs.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

is more space between the free foot and floor in order to pivot better on the standing leg. Homer and Cristina briefly reduce the bending in the turn but return to the level of bent knees that they started with before proceeding to the next forward step. All dancers stretch the front leg to a full extension before shifting their weight. They also stretch the back leg before closing it to the front, but not to a full extension.

We see the same pattern as in the *ocho atrás*, a change between bending and extending the leg during the movement. The knees are very active, compensating for vertical movement to remain stable in one horizontal plane.

Lateral Pelvic Tilt

Use of hip movement in the *ocho adelante* step and pivot combination is highly individual. As in the *ocho atrás*, it is not possible to find commonalities in *ocho* technique regarding lateral pelvic tilt and make any valid generalizations. All dancers have found individual ways to move their hips in these step and pivot sequences, particularly to aid the dissociation. Neri's and Cristina's hips remain nearly stable (below 5 degrees up or down on average) during the whole movement. In contrast, Maja drops the hip of her free leg visibly during the turn and passes through a straight position in the middle of the step, which is very similar to tango walking. Yanina follows a similar pattern, with the slight difference that she drops her hip a little less (below 10 degrees) than Maja (up to 15 degrees). In contrast, Marko and Homer tilt their hips the most in the step when the feet are the most apart (see Figure 4.34).

Dissociation of the Shoulder Line and the Hip Line

Finally, we examined the dissociation angle between the hip line and the shoulder line in the *ocho adelante*. The right and left sides remain a stable unit, which means that the dancers do not move one shoulder separately from the other but control the stability of their shoulder line (see Figure 4.35).

All dancers start to pivot before closing their feet, though the degree differs. As they do this, they use the impulse of the rotation of the upper body—while the pivot has already started—to pull the free leg close to the standing leg, gaining additional angular momentum in the pivoting. Cristina, Marko, Homer, and Neri continue to close their feet and then keep the feet stable for a time, while Maja and Yanina constantly move their free leg past the standing/rotating leg without ever stopping the movement of the free leg and continue directly into the next step.

In this demonstration, the dancers[101] rotate the shoulder line past the aligned center when turning their upper body almost up to the new walking direction, which means that they focus more on keeping to the path

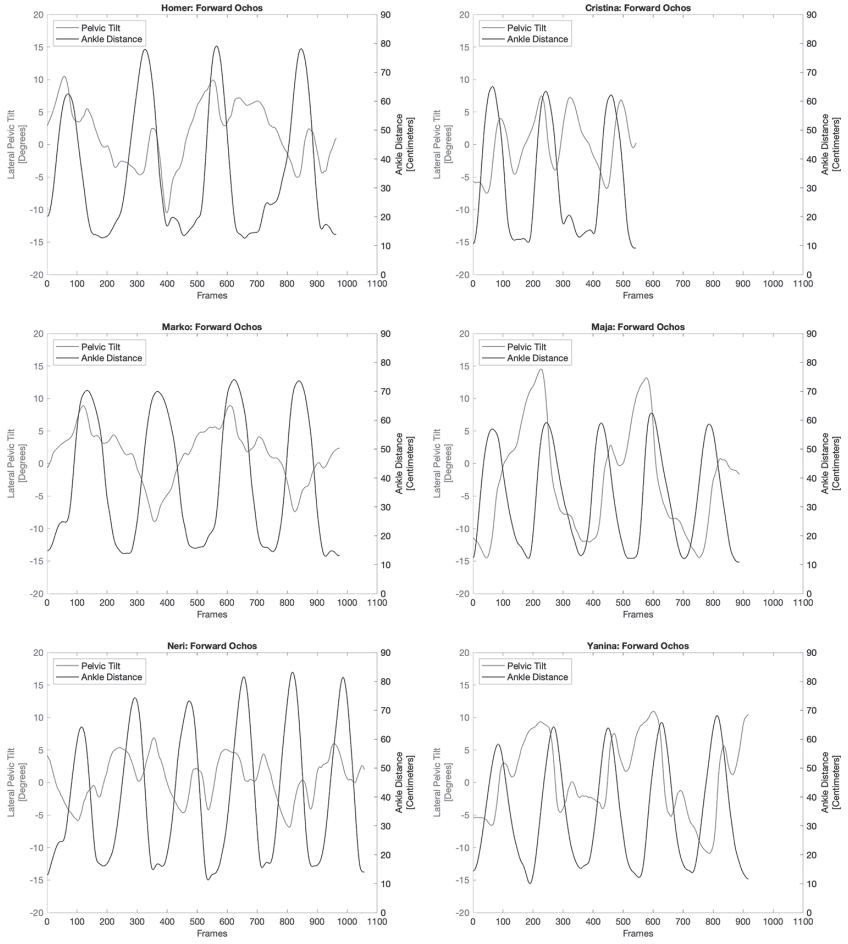

Figure 4.34 *Ocho adelante* ankle distance in relation to lateral pelvic tilt by all six dancers.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

on the floor than keeping the alignment with a "partner" (who was not present in this recording). From the overturned position of the upper body, they start to counterdissociate by adjusting the lower body into the release, first by closing the back leg toward the front and then starting to pivot in the middle of the step. Although this sample might seem incorrect or unrealistic compared to regular dancing, I consider it an even better opportunity to see how the pivot is generated. It appears that the dancer uses the

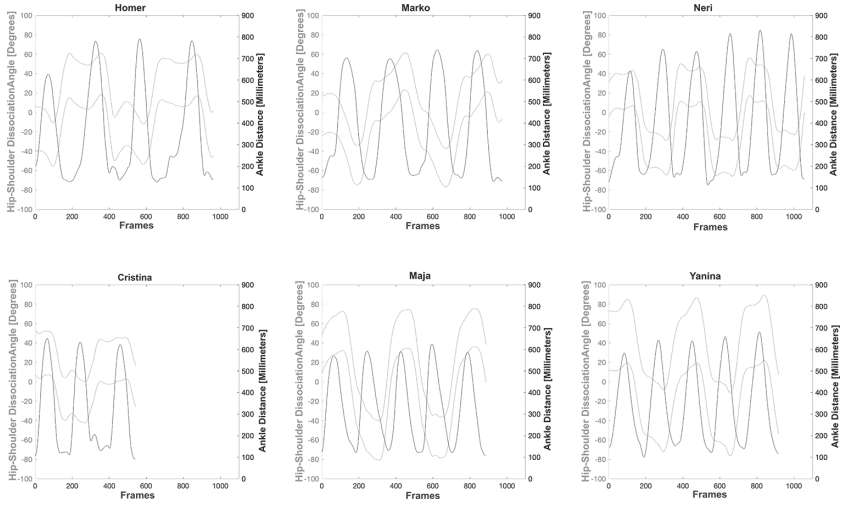

Figure 4.35 Hip line and shoulder line dissociation in the *ocho adelante* of six dancers.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

dissociation even more freely when not bound to remaining in alignment with a partner standing in front of them. This exact movement could also be part of a *giro*, in which the partners both move around a central axis.

Maja and then Yanina have the smoothest transitions from dissociation to counterdissociation, visible in the even peaks and valleys of the dissociation angle graph. Both start to release when initiating the pivot. The other four dancers each have two peaks in their dissociation graphs. The first, mostly smaller peak is always when the dancers start to shift their weight, and the second occurs when they start to pivot. The second peak is the one where the dissociation is released into the counterdissociation.

To sum up: in the *ocho adelante*, the knees are bent slightly while pivoting occurs. Dissociation technique is clearly the most important tool to initiate the 180-degree pivot, which is very similar to the *ocho atrás*. In addition, the dancers add momentum by continuing to pull the free leg toward the rotating leg while pivoting. The pelvic tilt movement does not follow a general pattern. The hips are used in an individual way to aid the dissociation, while a step is carried out and the transition is made into the pivot and vice versa.

The crucial peak in the dissociation when the dancers release and start to counterdissociate always coincides with the start of the pivot, meaning,

that it is the lower part of the body that releases and moves through the straight position and into the counterdissociation, from which the upper body takes over again. The better the control over the transition from lower body–led dissociation to upper body–led dissociation, and the more stable the speed of the dissociation and counterdissociation movements, the smoother and more effortless the whole movement appears to be.

The mocap analysis of the *ocho atrás* and *ocho adelante* has clearly shown how dancers use their bodies to carry out the pivot itself, as well as how they transition from step to pivot and back. We have seen that seemingly simple step–pivot combinations are based on a complex interplay of knee, hip, and torso actions, making use of the whole body. Based on this examination, I hope it has become clear that tango walking and turning techniques are based on movement patterns that are particular to the tango movement repertoire and differ significantly from "regular" walking movements.

Tango Musicality

In this section I investigate on which levels the previously examined tango movements relate to music and how dancers venture into dancing musically. To this aim, I have conducted a motion capture investigation into step and beat relations, which is the basis for further theoretical analysis of how tango dancers progress into what is considered musical dancing. I show what it means to become and be a musical dancer, and the importance that is being assigned to it in current translocal tango practice. I end this chapter with an inventory of tango movements that relate to rhythmic, melodic, and structural features in tango music. This list of sound–movement relations in tango conveys a concrete impression of basic options for musical dancing.

Step Relation to the Beat

Measuring musicality quantitatively is a futile endeavor not only because of its complexity but mostly because of the subjectivity both in dancing and in judging. What can be measured nevertheless is the very basic relation between music and dance, which in tango is the walking to the first and third beat of the bar. We used the motion capture material to dig into this relation, mainly because I was curious about one instance: Do dancers have initial contact on the beat, or do they shift weight on the beat? Or are they behind the beat, but in a constant and deliberate way? And even more fundamentally, do they relate to the beat in the way it is taught to beginners?

First, we investigated the dancers' abilities to respond physically to a click track stimulus, by tapping with their foot to a beat of 120 bpm.[102] We

found that all six dancers—albeit with differing precision—were clearly able to detect the beat and distinctly respond to it. They chose to tap to every second beat, as they would walk in tango.[103] Therefore, the time range from one beat to the next was exactly one second (60 bpm), and the dancers stayed within an average range of 0.05 seconds around the reference beat. From these results we could determine that all dancers are able to process the beat successfully in an embodied way.

The bases for the following analysis were three tasks by each of the six tango dancers. They had to walk by themselves to three different stimuli, making use of the complete space they had in the lab, but only doing front, side, and backward steps. The first stimulus was the piece rated best according to danceability in the online survey: Osvaldo Pugliese's "Recuerdo" from 1944 (termed "Best" in Figure 4.36). Second was the experimental ideal tango composed by Robert Schmidt, "Graz 1" (termed "Composed"), and third, the dancer's pre-chosen favorite track to dance to (termed "Individual"). The tracks were Carlos di Sarli's "Ensueños" from 1943 (Yanina and Neri), Ricardo Tanturi's "Pocas Palabras" from 1941 (Cristina and Homer), and Juan D'Arienzo's "El Último Café" from 1964 (Maja and Marko). All dancers walked for the entire length of the pieces.

To gain insights into the exact relation between tango step and beat, we analyzed how the initial floor contact relates to beat time instants in a 4/4 measure typical for tango music. "Initial contact" was calculated as the maximum distance between both heel markers ("maximum horizontal heel displacement value"). In other words, we define a "step instance" (the beginning or endpoint of a step) as the moment when both feet are furthest apart. We chose this technique because depending on the step direction, different parts of a foot strike the floor first, which makes a comparison difficult. Hence, the maximum distance proved to be the most precise approach.

The beat time instant was determined by the complex domain algorithm, implemented in SonicVisualiser.[104] Where automated detection showed significant mistakes, mainly due to recording quality or the absence of a machine-detectable beat, we decided to annotate the beat manually on basis of the algorithm results.[105]

The following Figure 4.36 shows the results of the step–beat relation by the six dancers to three musical stimuli.

The closer a value is to 0, the closer the initial contact with the floor is to the beat. We do see that all dancers are relatively stable in their interpretations. Considering possible discrepancies in the heel strike measuring method in addition to beat annotation flaws, the detected values can still be considered close to the beat, though not as precise as in the tapping experiment. With all caution, we can say that all six tango dancers show a relatively high beat stability, regardless of the stimulus. There is

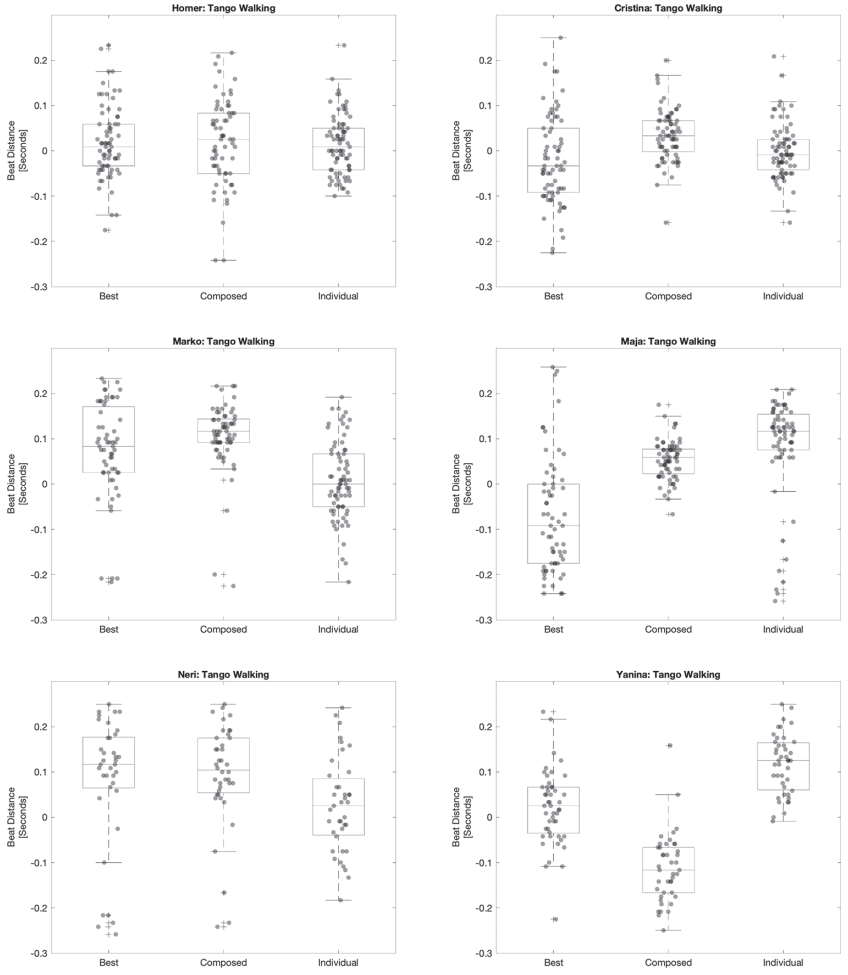

Figure 4.36 Step–beat relation results by six tango dancers to three different musical stimuli. Negative values are before the beat, positive after the beat.

Source: Graphic by Kurt Schatz.

no generalizable difference between musical tracks, between couples, or between individual dancers. Most importantly, there is not a clear pattern if the dancers bring down their foot before, after, or right at the beat. I had expected that the foot would go down before the beat, bringing the shifting of weight closer to the beat. However, the collected data here does not support this theory. Considering the previous movement analysis, it is safe to say that the way a step is carried out (in particular concerning root speed)

in relation to musical structures (for instance, *arrastre*) is just as important as timing the initial contact with the beat.

What we do see in this data set is that in a tango walking task—which, in terms of challenge, would be that of a beginner dancer's interpretation of the music (see following text)—all tango dancers clearly relate their steps to the beat. But relating to the beat is only the first and most profound relation to music. Leman (2007) has developed concepts for analysis of physically engaging with music. He finds three levels of engagement: synchronization, embodied attuning, and empathy, differing in the "action-perception couplings employed" (Burger et al. 2013, 1). Walking or tapping to the beat falls into the "synchronization" category, both the beat and simple walking being basic elements of sound and movement structures (Leman 2007, 112–115). What Leman calls "embodied attuning" refers to more complex musical structures, including rhythm, melody, and harmony, which are interpreted by more complex physical movements (Leman 2007, 115–117). The third level, "empathy", then allows an emotional connection, letting the dancer feel and express emotion induced by the music in their movement (Leman 2007, 121–127). Considering this useful categorization regarding tango, we see that tango dancers relate on all three levels. The more experience they have, and the more musicality they develop, the more they go from synchronization to attuning and empathy. It is important to add, however, that the way in which dancers react on all three levels is not universal. Their embodied attuning is based on culture-specific knowledge and experiences as well as individual traits and abilities—both within *tango argentino* music and dance traditions and outside, being the background of a dancer's acts and responses.

One more aspect from music-induced movement research should be mentioned. Burger et al. found out that especially head and arm/hands movements are utilized to interpret music more freely, while the feet stay closer to the beat (2013, 7). This is probably true for the Euro-American dance music Burger et al. studied, but not for tango. Here, head, arms, and hands are stable in the embrace and cannot move freely. Therefore, all musical expression is in the legs and in the overall horizontal movement of the body (center of mass). Burger et al. state that "there are certainly stereotypical genre- and style-dependent movements that are rather culturally developed than intrinsic to the music. Examples of these kinds of movements would be head banging in rock music or swaying hips to Latin music" (Burger et al. 2013, 7). Tango movement to music is a prime example for "cultural development" of movements fitting with the music; they are acquired as part of growing into the (tango dance) culture. In the following section, I will show in detail how dancers acquire movement knowledge and expertise for interpreting tango music—in short, how they become a musical dancer.

Becoming and Being a Musical Tango Dancer

Knowing possible step and pivot options and how to carry them out; being a capable leader and/or follower; knowing how to embellish the steps, improvise creatively, and navigate the floor safely—these are all important elements of tango dancing and must be mastered. But there is one more element: the music. Learning to dance not only *to* but *with* the music is at the core of the social tango dance experience, at least for a large part of the tango dancing community. Becoming a musical dancer or achieving tango musicality is a long path. By looking into the process a tango dancer goes through to become a musical dancer, I will also be able to describe the meaning of musicality in tango dancing, for all its facets cannot be captured in a simple definition. I want to state explicitly that *musicality* is of course defined differently in every performing art. The understanding of musicality I describe here is solely applicable to musicality in tango dancing.

In the previous part, I have shown that the fundamental connection between tango movement and music is a relatively simple step–beat connection. Tango music is written in a 4/4 measure structure with on average around 120 bpm. The conventional relation between the beat and walking in tango is that one step is taken every two beats: the first and the third beats of a bar. Beginning tango dancers are repeatedly trained to "walk to/on the beat", which challenges dancers to identify the beat and differentiate between the beats that one walks to and those that fall in between the steps. Exclamations such as "stay with the beat" and loud counting, clapping, and walking on spot as initial tasks for starting to move one's body in relation to tango music is what most beginners encounter in their first lessons. Publications focusing on learning to dance musically, like Amenábar and Kent, include training suggestions for recognizing and then walking to the beat (Kent 2018, 13–15; Amenábar 2009, 24–25). But being able to hear the beat and walk to it is not what it means to be a musical dancer. In fact, this is merely the basis upon which all musicality is built. According to Torp, "it is the movement between the beats that matters" (2013, 241), that is, the way one moves between foot strokes is the actual dancing. Furthermore, the more advanced a tango dancer becomes, the less this beat–step relation is actively used. I cite Torp, who describes the advanced options tango dancers have for interpreting rhythm in the music beyond the one-step-per-two-beats scheme:

> The dancers interpret the music, but not in the sense of relating their steps to musical accents on a one-to-one basis. A dancer may pause while musical accents are played, or move according to the (imagined) regular pulse when there is no musical accent played in either the melody

> line or rhythm section. One may also anticipate or delay the pulse, as tango singers perform *rubato*.
>
> (Torp 2014, 243)

The crucial point is that the fundamental feeling for where the tango beat structure is underlies all tango movements, even if the relation is not visible in the dancing. This is the reason that teachers put an emphasis on teaching the basic relation until it is so embedded in the students' motor systems that the dancers do not think about it and are free to "move apart" from the beat without ever losing the connection.

Advanced dancing in connection with the music is something tango dancers strive to achieve and judge positively in both their partners and influential professional teachers. For instance, Krüger writes about the criteria according to which dance teachers (in this case, Geraldine Rojas and Javier Rodríguez) are evaluated: "The success of their performances is . . . not measured in the virtuosity of complicated step patterns and acrobatic elements, but in the musical-interpretive content of the dance movements"[106] (Krüger 2012, 190). One of the common expressions relating to tango dancing collected by Benzecry Sabá is "*tener oído*", literally "to have a good ear", in reference to dancing, meaning, "a dancer who dances to the rhythm; someone that has rhythm, musicality" (Benzecry Sabá 2010, 80). Dancing in close connection to the music is termed "dancing musically" or having "tango musicality".

As tango dance practice changes and develops, what exactly encompasses tango musicality is also subject to change. In a recent publication in which I focus on reconnection strategies of tango music and dance starting from the early twenty-first century, I define *tango musicality* in contemporary discourse as the ability of a dancer to express the music through their dancing. This encompasses the ability to improvise an embodied response to the music, drawing on, but not limited to, tango movement techniques that visualize rhythmic structures, pauses, and phrases or relate to musical articulation (see Stepputat 2020, 60). Although musicality aims toward the ability to dance in close connection to musical features, it is more than that: "Walking the tango well (*caminar bien*), without resulting in a repetitive and graceless form of dance, involves playing with the rhythm of the music and responding to it without reproducing it exactly"[107] (Carozzi 2015, 107). In other words, relating to rhythmical and melodic features is only the basis for musical dancing. If the interpretation is "too obvious" or limited to prominent rhythmical features alone, the musicality is seen as less elaborate. A metaphor often used for the more refined connection to the music is that the dancers should become a further instrument of the tango orchestra, adding their physical melodies and rhythms to the already-

existing auditory structures. Denniston looks at it the other way around, stating that "the music becomes the third member of the couple, drawing out of the couple choreographic shapes they would otherwise never have created, and deepening the communication between the dancers" (Denniston 2007, 48). Whatever way one looks at it, relating the dancing to the music is important, and "tango musicality" is by which an individual's ability to connect and interpret the music is measured and judged.

It is important to note that dancing musically is not related to any style in tango—quite the contrary (also see Apprill 1999, 85, Bolasell 2011, 171). Prominent teachers of *neotango*, *milonguero*, and *salón* tango say that their style has a strong connection to the music. Some even claim that their style is more suited to dance musically than any other style. I believe that all styles can be danced musically, and dancers of all styles might ignore the music and focus on other elements of their dancing. Regardless of the focus on priorities—for instance, technical proficiency, acrobatic skill, emotional connection to the partner, innovations in movement repertoire, minimalism in movements—dancers can add musicality as an additional "feature" to their dancing with differing degrees of importance, or even make it the core of their tango endeavors. Musical dancers can be found in any style, but the way they express their musicality differs on an individual level—even though some common options for physical interpretations of tango music features do exist.

Learning to dance tango per se is a long endeavor, which is beautifully described by Davis (2015, 80–82). She cites a dancer who had already danced for more than six years, got stuck in her progress, started taking private lessons, and commented, "And that is when I thought: 'ok, this is a *lifetime* thing'" (Davis 2015, 82). Learning to dance musically adds another difficulty to the already-tiresome, never-ending, sometimes frustrating process of dancing tango. Several issues hinder musical progress from the beginning. First of all, when a person starts to dance tango, the main struggle lies in learning to move according to one's own physical abilities and in becoming accustomed to the tango movement repertoire. Learning a dance is primarily a physical experience (Pelinski 2000a, 258), even if teaching and learning includes verbalizations along with explanations of movements (see Morel 2011, Kimmel 2012). While the student is preoccupied with "'incorporating' . . . the model presented by the master/teacher [maestro]"[108] (Pelinski 2000a, 258), the focus is mainly on one's own body practice, which reduces or shuts out entirely the processing of acoustic input. Hearing the music while moving, let alone actively listening to it, exceeds the abilities of many beginner dancers. At a later stage, if the student is better capable of dancing and listening at the same time, another phenomenon occurs: the beginner tango dancer hears a music feature that

they consciously evaluate as "good to interpret with movement X", and by the time they are ready to carry it out, the musical moment has passed. The delay between "thinking to carry out movement" and doing it is significant for as long as the dancer still needs to process it mentally. As with the lead-and-follow concepts explained earlier, the reaction to the music also needs to be trained and transferred into embodied knowledge.

If the dancer is able to listen and move simultaneously after many hours of training, the next problem is the lead–follow concept on several levels. First, focusing on leading and following adds to the physical challenge of dancing tango, and even if a dancer is perfectly able to move with tango movement repertoire to tango music by themselves, focusing on leading and following can take away that ability completely. Furthermore, every dancer has an individual approach to listening to tango music, and possibilities to interpret it are as countless as the personal ability to implement ideas. Two dancers dancing together might have very different ideas of how to dance musically, which may lead to a dissatisfactory experience by both. In a mocap study with nine tango dance amateur couples, Xin Wen et al. have shown that if both dancers listen to music (as opposed to only the leader listening to music), the movements become more expressive, and the dancers have a better feeling of connection to each other (Xin Wen et al. 2017). The results from this research point toward the importance of dancing to the music as a couple, bringing together the individual musicality of two people. Indeed, dancing with someone who feels (on the "empathy" level as defined by Leman 2007) and attunes to the music in a similar way enhances the positive experience of dancing. Therefore, negotiating musicality between two dancers toward a joint musical experience in the music is the top class of musical abilities in tango dancing. Experienced dancers might even have their favorite partners for certain styles of tango music or orchestras and choose their partners in accordance with the music played (see Apprill 1999, 86).

In addition, many beginner dancers in translocal cosmopolitan tango practice lack experience in listening to tango dance music. They might be confronted with *época de oro* music for the first time ever in their first tango dance class. A lack of listening experience naturally hinders access to a bodily interpretation. It also impedes the ability to differentiate tango music: "the newcomer to tango tends to assume that all Tango music is suitable for dancing" (Denniston 2007, 177). The tango danceability of music has been explored in the previous chapter. If a tango piece is too complicated, too boring, too fast, too slow, too instable, or whatever a tango dancer might consider un-danceable, having the knowledge to judge and differentiate if it is "danceable" helps enormously in connecting to it physically—or deciding not to dance to it at all.

Each of the basic challenges—physical learning process, lead-and-follow obstacles, being unacquainted with tango music—must and can be tackled successfully in the process of becoming a musical dancer. Of course, solid tango technique in both individual movement and joint improvisation is essential. Only long-term training in tango permits the dancer to move freely to and with the music, and only then "the couple's dance, performed in improvisation, becomes extraordinarily musical, becoming as complex as tango music. It is obviously this dialogue between the couples and the music which when it takes place gives this dance its sublime character"[109] (Apprill 1999, 86). Starting from the ability to walk to the first and third beats, it is necessary to develop walking technique at different speeds, for instance, to interpret passages with an emphasis on all four beats in a bar by adding steps (double time) or reducing steps to one per bar or even less if full notes or longer notes are prominent in the melody or rhythm section (half time). Fast-paced steps also allow the dancer to interpret different musical patterns, such as triplets, arpeggios, and syncopated rhythms. Dancers also need to learn to carry out their movements with different qualities, which is much more complicated and less tangible than learning to walk in double time. Moving "*legato*" and "*staccato*" is based on a complex interplay of body movements, mostly explained in tango classes with metaphors for movement quality (*legato*: flowing, soft, caressing the floor, gliding; versus *staccato*: into the ground, abrupt, aggressive, strong impact). Along with mastering the individual technique, communicating with the partner must also be mastered: dancing *legato* by oneself is much simpler than giving the partner the impulses to move in a *legato* way, or learning to interpret impulses that signal *legato* movements accordingly.

The solution to becoming acquainted with tango music is quite simple. The more one actively listens to tango music, the more differentiations in orchestral style as well as intricate features and insights into the multilayered arrangements of tango become apparent, and not necessarily on a conscious level. This knowledge is not yet related to movement features; it aims to develop an appreciation and valuation of tango music in general. Building upon this, the dancer can apply this theoretical knowledge to the physical interpretation.

Knowing an orchestra, pieces, and even specific recordings of one piece well is seen by many as a safe path to interpreting the music in a suitable way. Carozzi writes that *milongueros* of the 1940s had the advantage that they knew all the orchestras very well, and through that,

> they knew when a certain chord, when a pause, when a change of rhythm would occur, when a sound would lengthen in time, and when it would stop abruptly. This knowledge allowed them to dance creatively, either—depending on the case—stepping on the first and third notes of the measure, introducing syncopations and silences, giving vertigo to

> the movements in the variations, or passing from the interpretation of one instrument to another of the orchestra.[110]
>
> (Carozzi 2015, 107)

Even if *milongueros* had the advantage of having been educated in their dancing while listening to the orchestras, dancers of today, who still mainly dance to the music of the *época de oro*, can acquire the same degree of intimate musical knowledge. To achieve this, listening practice is crucial.[111] In addition, knowing a particular recording of a piece well allows dancers to interpret it, even if it has an unpredictable structure:

> If two dancers are both very familiar with a piece of music, they may be able to improvise to it, no matter how unpredictable it seems to someone who does not already know it, and they may find the same quality that makes the music unpredictable on first hearing to be inspiring.
>
> (Denniston 2007, 178)

This concept of knowing a piece well to dance musically to it is applied by many tango dance teachers in their "musicality" classes.[112] For instance, they might play a representative tango piece repeatedly in a class until students know the piece by heart. The teachers then teach concrete options to interpret elements of the music with joint movements and embellishments. The disadvantage of this approach is that students might not be able to abstract the learned movement features and feel overwhelmed when trying to surpass these options and start dancing creatively to the piece. Furthermore, they might be completely helpless when another piece is played. Nevertheless, with some training, it is possible to abstract from one piece to others and start working creatively with the learned material. Regardless of the individual ability to transfer musical knowledge about one piece to others, the more tango pieces dancers are acquainted with, the better equipped they are to dance at *milongas*.

An alternative to teaching through repeated listening to one piece is teaching musical principles of tango, for instance, guiding students in listening to different instruments, differentiating between *staccato* and *legato* sections, or learning to understand phrases. In recent years, learning to dance musically has become an important part of learning to dance tango, and the need for information on behalf of the dancers is satisfied not only in musicality classes but also in book publications on the topic. For instance, Michael Lavocah has written *Tango Stories—Musical Secrets* (2014) and continues to publish books on famous tango composers and orchestra leaders of the *época de oro*. These books are easy to access and provide dancers with basic information on tango music so they can expand their knowledge of classic tango music. A publication by Joaquín Amenábar titled *Tango—Let's dance to the music* (2009) focuses specifically on tango

musicality. In the book, he explains tango music basics with easy words for "dancers without musical education" (subtitle of the book), including the form of tango music pieces, prominent rhythms, and the many layers of melody and rhythm. He also gives concrete suggestions on how to train listening, understanding, and ultimately dancing to the music, dealing with both improvisation and choreography. Oliver Kent (2018, 2019, 2020) has published several books on tango musicality for dancers. His approach is to explain absolute basics in tango music in a "for dummies" fashion, consciously writing from a "social dancer" perspective and deliberately ignoring correct musical terminology (Kent 2018, 46). A repeated topic in Kent's approach to teaching musicality is providing options for anticipation of musical happenings in the case that a tango piece is unfamiliar. His focus in the first book is mainly on teaching how tango music works and how to practice identifying the beat. In his second book on the topic (2019), which focuses on dynamics and syncopation, he demonstrates movement options for interpreting different qualities of tango music (*staccato-legato*, strong impulses). His third book (2020) examines further details such as rhythm irregularities.[113] In addition to these printed media, blogs by tango dancers provide information about musicality, for instance, the "Bautanz" blog by Chrisa Assis,[114] which features explanations and training videos. In addition to advanced musicality classes, concepts of teaching tango have also changed in recent years to include music-related topics even at the beginner level (Amenábar 2009, 112; see also Apprill 1999, 87).

Whatever approach and media are used, becoming a musical dancer takes much training, many moments of trial and error, failure, and progress. Useful routines for learning to physically interpret music are commonly taught. Surpassing these basics, adding individual creativity, and broadening the repertoire are the aims of experienced dancers as they develop their own musical tango dancing.

Physical Interpretations of Musical Features: An Inventory

There are no "fixed rules to choreographically interpret the music",[115] states Pelinski (2000a, 259). This is very true, and indeed, a good dancer is mostly considered someone who is not repetitive in the movements and not predictable in the interpretation of the music. Nevertheless, there are certain movements that form a basic repertoire of the physical interpretation of tango musical features. It is important to note that these are not a fixed canon at all, nor should they be—quite the opposite. With this inventory, I want to give concrete *examples* for relations between tango sound and movement structures in practice. Again, the inventory does not capture what it means to dance musically. Instead, the interpretations of musical features captured here are the basis from which tango dancers

develop their personal musical styles and preferences, adding, mixing, and developing them further in their individual improvisations.

This inventory is primarily based on my own experience as well as years of watching teacher performances at countless tango festivals all over Europe. In addition, I base my analysis on a selection of films that illustrate the movements featured here. The films are all recordings of performances to *época de oro* tango music at tango festivals in Europe from the last five years, all of them publicly accessible on YouTube.[116] The couples I incorporated into this selection are representative of a broad variety of styles and backgrounds: Martín Maldonado and Maurizio Ghella,[117] Horacio Godoy and Cecilia Berra,[118] Mariano Frúmboli and Juana Sepúlveda,[119] Carlitos Espinoza and Noelia Hurtado,[120] Ariadna Naveira and Fernando Sánchez,[121] Murat Erdemsel and Sigrid Van Tilbeurgh,[122] and of course, the three couples that were part of the research project.[123] I chose these couples because they are generally considered to be particularly versed in interpreting tango music, or "dancing musically".

Musical features that I include in the inventory are directly related dance interpretations of rhythmical, structural, and melodic features. In the following, I organize them into sections and give a short description of the music and the respective dance feature. At the end, all features are listed in a comparative table. What I do not include are general variations of dancing to tango pieces with different musical character. Music with sharp, strong accents and a *marcato in cuatro* (emphasis on all four beats of a bar)—for instance, in recordings by Juan D'Arienzo—evoke a different response than music with strong *arrastre*, melodic lines, and dramatic dynamics, like Osvaldo Pugliese's late recordings. Dancers all agree that dancing musically also means to dance differently to music with diverse musical character. The movements included here are those that can appear in all kinds of tango music, regardless of mood or intensity of dynamics. I also do not include a categorization of movement *quality* in general. All mentioned movements can be executed with differing quality, depending on the music, the individual, the moment, and the partner. They all can be carried out by either one of the dancers or both at the same time. In some instances, I include terms from tango movement repertoire as examples. For a brief description of these movements, see the glossary.

Structural Elements

CADENCE

At the end of a piece, but also between main parts in a tango composition, a V-I cadence on the second and third beat of a 4/4 measure is a standard ending. Dancers interpret this very prominent music structural element

with a wide variety of options, but some are quite common. The most practiced movement is the *closing of the legs* into a neutral standing position when the music reaches the tonic (I). Typical movements on the (V) are the stretching out of one leg, a step on place, or a *voleo* in preparation for the closing. Alternatively, the dancers *close on the (V) and stretch out one leg* to the back or the side with the (I). Sometimes, especially in show dances, this movement ends in a prominent pose, both dancers or just the follower bending the knee of the standing leg for further reach with the free leg.

TRANSITION FROM RHYTHMIC (STACCATO) TO MELODIC (LEGATO) SECTIONS

Although in tango melodic and rhythmical elements are often played at the same time in different instruments—for example, long, carried notes in the violins and short staccato notes in the bandoneon—there are shifts in the music when one element takes over with much more intensity. Dancers like to interpret such changes in musical character with changes in movement quality. For instance, if a prominent melodic line begins, the couple *stops in a position* that allows them to continue with drawing patterns with the free leg on the floor, like going into a *cross (cruce) without opening* or stopping in a *parada*. This can be followed by a pause in movements, or very slow movements on place before the next step is made (also see *melodic interlude*).

Rhythmical Elements

EMPHASIS ON FIRST BEAT IN A BAR

The first beat is generally an important moment in the music, but if there is a strong accent on this beat (stronger than average in the respective piece), the dancers heighten this emphasis with an *impulsive movement*. The quality of the movements (bigger reach or strong impulse) is of more importance than the movement structure itself. Nevertheless, some movements from tango repertoire are suitable per se because of their movement quality. These are *voleos*—in particular, high *voleos*—*sacadas* or *ganchos*. A strong first beat can also be supported by an *absence of a follow-up movement*: a strong movement on the first beat, followed by a pause or particularly slow movement, enhances the impression of the impulse in the music and movement on the previous beat, as is done in the *arrastre* interpretation described next.

STRONG ARRASTRE

Related to the emphasis on the first beat is the interpretation of a strong *arrastre* moment in the music. *Arrastre* is mostly carried out toward the

first and also the third beat of a bar. A crescendo toward the first beat can be paralleled in movement with an acceleration in a (preparatory) movement; the following short, accentuated note on the first beat is mirrored in an obvious, accented movement that ends or stops abruptly on the beat or very shortly thereafter. Some possibilities for such a movement include an elongated side step, including bending the knee of the standing leg, which gives the movement more width. The crescendo here is interpreted by an accelerated movement in the side step toward a sharp stop, when the shift of weight is finished and one or both dancers stay in the position with the free leg extended. Another option is a forward pivot (half *ocho*) with extended free leg, which is stopped abruptly right after the turn. *Voleos* are a third possibility. They bear in them the exact movement quality—acceleration toward a climax with abrupt ending—that *arrastre* can trigger. In all these examples, the relation to the *arrastre* can be emphasized by a pause right after the sudden movement, lasting three or even more beats.

STRONG IMPULSE ON ANY BEAT

Similar to the interpretation of the first strong beat, any other beat that stands out musically can be interpreted with a sudden movement. These include the same options as described before in relation to the first beat: *voleos*, *sacadas*, *ganchos*, but also a *tap on the floor* instead of a step, the closing of the feet, or even a slight *jump to the side*. All movements from tango dance repertoire that bear in them the quality of a short, staccato movement with a strong emphasis, can be used to enhance any strong beat provided by the music.

MARCATO IN CUATRO

If all four beats in a bar are emphasized in the music, dancers can correspond with *double-time* walking, carrying out one step per beat. The additional in-between steps are not added regularly, but instead, they are added now and then, more often on the second beat than the fourth. Double-time walking can be led but is also added as *adorno* by either the leader or the follower. An alternative to walking in double time is to insert *taps* on the second or fourth beat, which gives the impression of "one leg movement per beat". Taps are inserted as *adornos* and give mostly the follower the possibility to interpret a series of fast notes with quick movements without disturbing the joint movement flow.

RHYTHMICAL FIGURES

As rhythmical structures, I summarize those figures played by at least one instrument that deviate from the basic, regular rhythm in a limited period

of time within a musical piece. Prominent examples are triplets, syncopations, or a 3–3–2 beat emphasis structure. Dancers interpret these prominent rhythmical sequences by *shifting their movements away from the basic beat to the emphasized notes in the rhythmical figure*. This means that they can, for instance, step, tap, shift weight, or carry out other similar sharp, short movements at the time an accent of the rhythmic figure occurs. This shift to the different rhythmical structure can disturb the joint flow significantly if the dancers do not communicate about it; because of this, it is mostly embedded in the joint movement as part of the lead–follow.

SERIES OF EIGHTH NOTES

In *época de oro* recordings—and in contemporary recordings of *época de oro* style—a series of eighth notes can mostly be found in the piano and in the bandoneon sections. The fast notes are a welcome musical moment to be interpreted by the dancers. The most common connection is made by walking very quickly with *one step per each eighth note* or adding *taps to each eighth note*. This can be done by the leader, the follower, or both, and in any direction. Such series of fast steps can be led, but they can also be inserted as *adornos* by either one of the dancers. If double- or quadruple-time steps are added as *adorno*, the dancer has to take care that they insert an even number of extra steps to end the sequence with the weight on the same leg as the partner.

SINGLE LONG NOTES

If one or more instruments or the singer has a long note, this halt in the music can be used for the dance interpretation as well. Dancers can use this for a *pause* in their movements, or a slowing down of movements, for instance, in turning motions like *ochos*. It can also be interpreted by *slow adornos*, any circular movement on the floor with the free leg, for example, or a slow lifting and lowering of the free leg, with stretched or bent knee.

RUBATO BY SOLO INSTRUMENT OR SINGER (FRASEO)

Singers as well as instruments that temporarily have the solo lead in a piece phrase their melodic lines with many little *rubati* but never strive very far from the straight underlying rhythm (tango *fraseo*). Dancers can choose—if they know a recording well—to deviate from even beats and dance to the *fraseo*. This kind of rhythmic interpretation is not related to any particular tango movement; instead, the *movements are adapted to match the timing of the fraseo*. For shorter periods, this is possible as *adorno* both by the leader and the follower but can also be incorporated into the lead–follow by the leader for longer parts, even whole phrases.

PAUSE

Finally, a pause in the music—as rarely as it happens in tangos for dancing—can of course also be mirrored with *pauses in the movement flow*. Depending on the quality of the pause, the movement pause can have different, fitting qualities. An abrupt pause or a soft transition from sound to silence and back can be interpreted with very different movement qualities—an abrupt stopping and starting of a movement, or a gliding motion into a standstill and back, or anything in between. The movement pause in tango, as explored earlier, is not only the absence of movement but also has a quality of tension and also anticipation of following movement in it and is more than the absence of movement, just as a pause in a musical piece is a moment of anticipation and tension.

Melodic Elements

ARPEGGIO

The interpretation of melodic elements is not as common as that of rhythmical structures, which are more obvious and widespread—not only in tango. Nevertheless, some melodic features are commonly interpreted with a particular movement repertoire. Foremost, these are arpeggios, or more precisely, the end of an arpeggio. The upward melodic movement and the highest note as a melodic climax at the end can be interpreted with a *voleo*, its highest point and ending coinciding with the highest musical note. A very different way to dance to an arpeggio is a *series of very fast and small steps* in any direction, as a couple or just one dancer, led or as *adorno*. The steps do not necessarily have to be the same amount as notes played in the arpeggio; the important point is that the leg movements are as rapid as possible to visualize the rapid musical notes in the arpeggio. Yet another variant is a quick individual *pivot* that ends with the highest note.

MELODIC UP OR DOWN MOVEMENT

If a melodic figure is prominent at a point in a tango piece, dancers can turn toward this melodic phrase, also in combination with the rhythm of the phrase, but rarely with the underlying beat structure. The most obvious physical interpretation of an up- or downward movement in the melody is the *lifting and lowering of the free leg*, or a further *bending of the knees* in a step sequence or *rising higher* onto the balls of the feet. Even if these movements are minimal and much less obvious to the onlooker, they are used for melodic interpretations and add to the diverse options dancers have to relate their movement repertoire to the musical material.

MELODIC (SOLO) INTERLUDE

Similar to long notes, a short melodic interlude can be used for *pauses* in the movement or a *slowing down* of movements. As a transition into a melodic interlude, dancers may use the *parada* or *cruce*, which eases the transition from beat-related steps into a movement that relates to the melodic development instead of an underlying beat, which might even be completely absent in such solo passages. In addition to pausing or holding a position with minimal movement, dancers can use their free legs to interpret the melodic shape with *adornos*, *vertically or horizontally*, also making use of up–down movements of the leg in accord with up–down movements in the melody as explained earlier.

Overview of Music–Dance Relations

Table 4.1 Overview of musical features and possible dance interpretation in tango social dancing, based on personal experience and video analysis of professional dance couple performances.

	Musical Feature	*Dance Interpretation*
Structural Elements	Cadence	Closing of legs on I, on V, for instance, stretching leg to the side, small step on place, *voleo*.
		Closing on V and stretching out one leg to the side on I (possibly into an ending pose).
	Shift from rhythmic (staccato) to melodic (legato) part	Stopping in a stable standing position (e.g., *cruce*, *parada*) to continue with slower and smoother movements or *adornos*.
Rhythmic Elements	Emphasis on first beat in a bar	Impulsive movement (high *voleo*, *sacada*, *gancho*); absence of follow-up movement.
	Strong arrastre	Longer pause lasting 2–4 beats (or more).
		Going deeper into the knee, elongated side step with following pause, forward *ocho* with extended leg, *voleo*/*gancho* adornment.
	Strong impulses on any beat	Impulsive movement (*voleo*, tap, close feet, small jump to the side).
	Marcato in cuatro	Taps in between steps, double-time walking by leader and follower, led or as *adorno*.
	Rhythmic figures (triplets, syncopation, 3–3–2)	Stepping or tapping on the beats of the figure instead of the basic beat.

	Musical Feature	*Dance Interpretation*
	Series of eighth notes	Sequence of double-time steps or taps by leader, follower, or both, either led or as *adorno*.
	Single long notes	Pause in movement, very slow movement, *adorno* with free leg.
	Rubato by solo instrument or singer (*fraseo*)	Matching the *fraseo* with any movement.
	Pause	Pause in movement flow.
Melodic Elements	Arpeggio	Fast and small steps, *voleo*, turn with abrupt ending.
	Melodic up or down movement	Adornment with free foot horizontally or vertically, bending knees or getting higher on balls of the feet (minimal).
	Melodic interludes	Adornments with free foot, horizontally and vertically, pauses.

Tango Dance and Its Musicality in a Nutshell

In the first part of this chapter, I focused on tango movement repertoire, starting from its basic elements posture, walking, and pivoting. I have shown that these three elements constitute the fundamental elements upon which all further principles of moving in tango are built. As any movement and music style, it is not only the movements but also the way of carrying them out that define the genre to a large extent. In tango, these are embellishments of steps done by one or both dancers to "spice up" the movements and interpret the music in an embodied way. A main aesthetic of tango is that there are almost no up-and-down movements—at least no rapid ones—giving the dancing couple's movements a gliding quality. An important further principle is the incorporation of pauses, or moments of stillness in tension, into the dance. Because tango is a couple dance, two dancers need to communicate with each other through their bodies, which is done by a constant micro-action aiming to keep the two dancers aligned in front of each other. Dancers train their physical reactions to their partner's movements to a degree that they become embodied knowledge. This way of communicating physically is closely connected to the issue of leading and following, the two defined roles in a tango couple. Next, I explored the improvisational aspect of tango dancing. The joint improvisation in tango is always guided by external auditive (music), visual (dance space), and physical (partner) influences. Leaders learn to use their movement repertoire ad hoc in any moment, reacting to possibilities and limitations, while followers learn to react to lead impulses in a variety of ways, opening up improvisatory figurations as part of the couple's embodied dialogue. To the description of tango

dance basics and principles, I added an in-depth mocap analysis of forward steps and backward steps as well as pivot technique in the *ocho atrás* and *ocho adelante*. In this part of the chapter, I showed how tango steps may be differentiated from regular steps. Tango forward steps are larger relative to regular walking, the free leg is controlled, the front leg is fully stretched before the weight is shifted, both male and female dancers make active use of lateral hip movement, and there is a stronger acceleration and deceleration of the root speed. In backward steps, the follower matches the forward step by the leader by bending the standing leg knee further to obtain a wider reach, also through controlled, high heel speed at the beginning of a backward step to make room for the leader's feet, and at the same time by keeping the same root speed as that of the leader. By examining forward *ocho* (*adelante*) and backward *ocho* (*atrás*) movement technique, I was able to demonstrate how dissociation is used to generate turning energy for a pivot. Dancers dissociate their hips from their shoulders and go into a counterdissociation while pivoting, their step and pivot movements overlapping. The insights gathered here help understand which options and limitations exist to relate tango movements to tango music.

In the second part of this chapter, I have shown specifics of how tango music and dance relate. I started with an investigation into step–beat relations, utilizing motion capture to measure how exactly professional tango dancers place their steps in relation to tango music. The result showed that they are not as precise as they are with tapping to the music, but they still relate very closely to the music. The experiment also showed that the dancers relate the initial floor contact of the free leg to the beat, while the shift of weight happens after the beat. In the following section, I elaborated on the progress of learning to dance musically. Although the step–beat relation is the foundation of tango dancing, it is only the very basis from where tango dancers develop their musicality. Advanced dancers do not focus on relating their steps to the beat; this relation underlies their movements as an orientation but does not have to be carried out at all times. Musical dancers are considered those who play with details in the music, relate to different musical aspects in addition to the rhythm, and are able to vary their embodiment of music. Suffice it to say, learning to dance musically is a long process and needs a few pre-requisites. Based on good technique and the ability to improvise together with a partner, dancers learn to actively listen to the music, and freeing themselves from any preoccupation with "technical movement matters". No less important is the intricate knowledge of tango music, based on repertoire and a fundamental understanding of the inner workings of tango music. I closed this chapter with an inventory of selected examples of tango movements dancers use to relate to music on a structural, rhythmic, and melodic level. This inventory is not exhaustive, nor does it intend to be. It is merely a collection of concrete examples of how music and dance may relate. On

a choreomusical level, the inventory shows which elements in the music (among many more) dancers may expect and relate their dance repertoire to. It is thereby a further indication of the need of variety *and* stability in a piece to be considered tango-danceable.

Notes

1 All the description and analysis of tango dance basics and choreomusical aspects of tango in this chapter are based on my personal experiences embedded in the translocal tango community. In many cases, what I describe are ideals dancers strive for, and not necessarily reality for many. I also want to add that there are certainly divergent, or even outright opposing, opinions to what I write here. I acknowledge alternative views of tango dancing and do not claim my take on tango as authoritative.
2 As stated in the introduction, there are two more types of tango music that are regularly played at milongas: *tango vals* and *tango milonga*. In terms of movement repertoire, both are very closely related to tango but slightly differ in the choice of movements from the existing repertoire (for instance, more turns in *vals*) and the quality of movement (with more "stomping" in the steps in *milonga*). A definition of the exact differences between the three tango options in relation to *vals* and *milonga* music could well be the topic of another investigation into tango movements and is beyond the scope of this book.
3 Yanina (Figure 4.1) tends to push her shoulders further back, which is her individual posture more than a general feature.
4 See Petridou (2014) for a thorough exploration of the high heel in tango, its history and significance as a material aspect of tango culture, also including ritual, erotic, and feminist aspects of shoe fashion.
5 A part of the accompanying material to this book is a demonstration of forward walking and backward walking by Yanina Quiñones. See https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121096 and https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121097.
6 See Carozzi for a discussion on how this rule was re-established in the early twenty-first century as a code for all tango dancers, regardless of style (2015, 116–119).
7 *Caminar el tango circulando de manera continua en una pista atestada de gente era una tarea complicada debido a que los milongueros . . . no avanzaban guardando distancias equivalentes y constantes entre sí. Diseñaban, en cambio, rutas sinuosas, adaptándose a los cambios de ritmo de las parejas que los precedían, a sus avances y retrocesos, a sus 'amagues' y pausas sorpresivas*.
8 Because walking in tango is of such importance, many teachers have dedicated considerable time into finding proper explanations and metaphors for the carrying out of a step. See Kimmel (2012) on the subject and Denniston (2007, 33–37) for an exemplary description of a tango step. Countless tango step tutorials can be found online, for instance, on YouTube.
9 I focus here on the technique of the legs, leaving out any leading or following movement elements that are added to the footwork in the upper body. More details about leading and following principles are addressed later.
10 Dancers need to leave space for the partner's foot in their trajectory. If the walking base were zero, the dancer doing a forward step would have to place the moving leg exactly on top of the foot of the partner's standing leg. See Stepputat (2023) for an analysis of tango dance partners' floor paths.

11 Some dancers include a 360-degree turn, during which they quickly let go of the embrace and reconnect afterward. Such movements are more likely in styles that employ an open embrace.
12 As part of their study of coordination patterns in tango, Kimmel and Preuschl (2016, 222–223) examined turning principles in a *giro* using motion capture to show the exact relations between shoulder and hip movements and sternum alignment in relation to the partner.
13 See a wide variety of *adornos* demonstrated by Maja Petrović: www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9RzQgUmJ9Y.
14 There is no rule without an exception: one embellishing element dancers include mostly in *tango milonga* is a small joint sidewise hop in which they take off and land on both feet.
15 Sometimes dancers "wiggle their hips" as a fun embellishment for a joyous, comedic effect rather than as a serious element of tango.
16 Personal conversation with Judy van Zile, December 2020; see also Van Zile (2018, 308–309).
17 She later clarifies that the "hearts" were more of a metaphor; what connects in fact are the centers of the body on the level of the heart (Denniston 2007, 106).
18 One might say that the perfect connection is not the *aim* but the *means* to achieve the ultimate dancing experience.
19 An important aspect related to the connection between the couple is the aspect of "flow" based on Csikszentmihalyi (1975), which is defined as a state of mind in which an activity is carried out as if by itself, and which can only be reached if a person is neither overstrained nor underchallenged. Zubarik has researched flow in tango (2013) in relation to close-embrace dancing. Reaching a flow state is verbalized by tango dancers with different metaphors and terms, for instance, a "tango moment" (Gritzner 2017, 56) or "the level where not only the follower but also the leader accessed the active meditative state, abandoning the self into the other . . . and being led by the music. At this level the emotional experience of the dance and the choreographic expression of it are at their most profound" (Denniston 2007, 50). Denniston compares it to the "Vulcan mind melt", where two individuals temporarily share one conscience.
20 *Dos cuerpos enlazados con mayor o menor proximidad, en actitudes más introspectivas que sensuales, y que se comprenden a través de claves difíciles de desentrañar si los que observan son no iniciados*.
21 An alternative is to do side steps and make crossing movements with the legs, which is used by some tango dancers in close-embrace dancing as an option to stay connected stably in front of each other without dissociating and turning the hipline away from the partner.
22 See Liska on the change from "marking with the hands" to "indicating movements . . . with the whole body" in the 1990s (2017, 17).
23 *Las modalidades que imponen hoy las milongas gays y lesbianas no han alterado la división de roles, independientemente de quien asuma cuál de ellos*.
24 See also Liska (2017) for insight into the loosening of gender roles and queer tango revolutions starting in the 1990s.
25 Opinions about "ideal coupling" that propose mixed-couple partnering with male lead and female follow as the ideal are not uncommon and form a part of the diverse translocal tango practice. See, for instance, the blog post by

Ivica Anteski, who propagates the advantages of a gender "polarity" in tango (https://tangomentor.com/leader-follower-confusion/).

26 Blog post by Cacho Dante, original text from 1998, posted 10 June 2008: https://cachodante.wordpress.com/2008/06/10/the-tango-and-trapeze-acts/.

27 A fascinating topic worth exploring in this context is machismo, gendered roles, and representation in tango. Several publications have dealt with these issues intensively; hence, I will not expand upon this topic here. See, for instance, Savigliano (2010), Liska (2016, 2017), Tobin (2015), Burt (2015), and Davis (2015).

28 *El eje del equilibrio . . . continúa siendo una responsabilidad masculina.*

29 See also Merritt's discussion of "active" versus "passive" following (2012, 90–92).

30 https://cachodante.wordpress.com/2008/06/10/in-transit-with-cacho-dante/.

31 A thorough exploration of improvisation in dance or more general concepts of improvisation in the performing arts is far beyond the scope of this overview. In this section, I focus mainly on research that has been done on improvisation in tango dancing and statements by dancers concerning the emphasis on and conceptualization of improvisational elements in tango dancing. Two texts informed my understanding of the concept of improvisation (including a critique of the loaded dichotomy composition—improvisation) in general: Nooshin (2003) and Kimmel (2019).

32 Merritt looks at improvisation together with innovation, which she describes as being just as important in developing a personal style as the ability to improvise freely.

33 See Stepputat (2021) for a detailed discussion of the concept of "style", with a particular focus on the social and economic agendas behind style differentiation in tango.

34 See, for instance, Morel, who mentions the terms popular in the 1990s for the three main styles mentioned here as "Urquiza", (*salón*) "Almagro", (*milonguero*), and "Naveira" (*neotango*) (Morel 2011, 197).

35 Because *tango nuevo* is also a term for tango music after Astor Piazzolla, I prefer to use the term *neotango* here for the dance style to avoid any ambiguity. Other authors use *tango nuevo* (Merritt 2012), and public discourses among tango dancers make use of both terms interchangeably. Also see Merritt's discussion of the inadequateness and ambiguity of the term *tango nuevo* for a dance "style" (2012, 49–53).

36 See an informative film documentary on the process of developing *tango nuevo* dancing, "Chicho—a conversation", by Eric Finke 2014: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iYehErZ_yE.

37 Though their female partners have not gained the same popularity, they are also well-known: Gustavo Naveira's main partner is Giselle Anne, Fabian Salas danced with Lola Díaz, and Mariano "Chicho" Frúmboli danced first with Eugenia Parilla and is currently with Juana Sepúlveda.

38 Although they do not define their revision of tango as a new style and oppose the name (Merritt 2012, 53), this is where tango dance history has placed them.

39 *Concepto corporal radicalmente distinto.*

40 *Ein modernes Körperverständnis im Bezug auf den Tango bedeutet somit auch eine reflexive Haltung gegenüber dem traditionellen Schrittrepertoire, was zu einer körperbewussten Umsetzung der erlernten Bewegungen führt.*

41 www.theorganictangoschool.org/.

42 www.theorganictangoschool.org/Our_Bio.
43 www.theorganictangoschool.org/Our_Bio.
44 www.youtube.com/c/tangostudent/featured.
45 www.theorganictangoschool.org/OurSchool.
46 Personal conversation, 5 August 2019.
47 See www.theorganictangoschool.org/OurPhilosophy. In fact, they are openly critical of market aspects, for instance, their statement "Categorical contemporary tango styles are the results of a globalized market".
48 *Se enfatizará una continuidad con un pasado tradicional, sobre la base de selecciones, apropiaciones y conexiones significativas con experiencias y prácticas preexistentes*.
49 See Chapter 1 for the historical context and development of the *milonguero* movement in a translocal perspective.
50 I do not enter discussions of erotic or sexual connotations in any of the described styles or tango in general. Among tango dancers, the erotic element is generally played down, not perceived at all, or channelled into technicalities. According to Carozzi, "in the classes, the use of this technical and anatomical vocabulary also veiled the erotic connotations of the close embrace and the 'chest to chest' body contact that characterized the *tango de confetería* and which is preserved in 'the milonguero style' " (Carozzi 2019, 64–65).
51 *Bastante repetitivo, se aprende fácilmente, se baila "pregado-apretado" y propicia la seducción, incluso en los bailarines poco experimentados. Para no ser soporífico, necesita una rica escucha musical y mucho sentimiento*.
52 This is a common statement that is often countered with the argument that dancers can focus on musical expression regardless of style.
53 For the complex issue of showcasing and (male) representation in tango dancing, see Morel (2011) and Tobin (2015).
54 Krüger (2012, 190) states that the two partners share an axis. This might be the case in certain instances, but not consistently, occurring at different levels of intensity depending on individual preferences.
55 See the thorough description and analysis of *ochos* in the movement repertoire mocap analysis section.
56 An *ocho cortado* (cut *ocho*) is a forward *ocho* by the follower, led to the side and around the leader and abruptly stopped midway.
57 *Permite moverse en una superficie del tamaño de un pañuelo de bolsillo, sin disminuir la proximidad de los cuerpos*.
58 All biographical information is taken from their professional website: www.majaymarko.com/. For an impression of their dancing, see their YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/channel/UCFyWqbEkWPULVD70PguLmgQ.
59 They also emphasize the fact that there is not a hierarchy in the couple from leader to follower: "We see ourselves as equals in the couple and we both contribute to the dance equally. . . . Go past leading and following and start dancing".
60 Full original quote: *Como parte de esta formalización y experimentación en el baile, la práctica de tango salón como denominación genérica, tenderá a diferenciarse a partir de algunos estilos característicos*.
61 Cited in Morel (2011, 203).
62 *Una pareja que avanza con pasos largos pisando como con guantes*.
63 *Este estilo suele ser más apropiado para bailar orquestaciónes musicales no tan "rítmicas"*.
64 www.yaninayneritango.com/Biography_GB.html.

65 It seems this academy is no longer in operation in 2020.
66 See www.yaninayneritango.com/Biography_GB.html.
67 See www.scuoladitangocorazonalsur.it/index.html.
68 www.tangorougecompany.com/.
69 www.yaninayneritango.com/Teaching_GB.html.
70 *Ahora bien, frente a estas construcciones discursivas que expresan algunos de los rasgos genéricos o 'típicos' del estilo, paradójicamente, si atendemos u observamos las técnicas y los modos de ejecutar o poner en movimiento estos rasgos, veremos que sus expresiones particulares pueden variar considerablemente entre los actuales maestros, profesores y practicantes*.
71 *Motion capture* is a generic term for different systems that track and record movement data in 3D. See Nymoen (2013, 13–22) and Dick (2015, 68–73) for an overview of different motion capture technologies.
72 See the company website: www.mathworks.com/products/matlab.html. We mainly used the Mocap Toolbox (version 1.5) by Burger and Toiviainen (2013).
73 Christopher Dick was my research assistant throughout the project. An ethnomusicologist, he ventured into computer science and took an interest in motion capture possibilities for his master thesis on capoeira. Toward the end of the project, Kurt Schatz took over as my research assistant and concluded the analysis with MATLAB. By using the personal pronoun "we" in this section, I reference and acknowledge the teamwork behind the mocap recordings.
74 The software version we used is Optitrack Motive 2.0.1. See the company website at https://optitrack.com/.
75 Homer Ladas, personal communication, 5 January 2021.
76 For a contemporary definition and discourse on digital fieldwork, see Beaulieu (2017); for the fundamentals of collaborative research applied in this project, see Lassiter (2005).
77 In earlier analysis, initial contact was called "heel strike"; see, for instance, a critique of the term in Winter (1992).
78 The "ankle" is calculated based on the two markers AnkleOut and AnkleIn. To determine the direction of the step, we used the following calculation: A vector is calculated from waist back (based on the two markers WaistLBack and WaistRBack) to waist front (based on markers WaistLFront and WaistRFront), which points forward from waist back to waist front. A second vector is calculated pointing from waist back to the heel of the moving leg. The dot product from both vectors shows the direction of movement of the free leg: If it is 1, the two vectors point in the same direction; if it is 0, they are at 90 degrees; and if it is –1, they point in opposite directions. To detect a step to the front, the dot product should be >0.25, meaning, the angle between the vectors should be less than 75 degrees.
79 The calculation of speed is based on the MATLAB MoCap Toolbox functions mctimeder() (accurate version) and mcnorm() (Burger and Toiviainen 2013).
80 The total number of detected gait cycles in walking to tango music tasks (click, "Recuerdo", "Graz 1", individual favorite) is: Homer: 18, 24, 16, 28; Cristina: 6, 13, 18, 11; Marco: 20, 35, 41, 37; Maja: 14, 27, 34, 38; Neri: 1, 5, 2, 4; Yanina: 17, 22, 19, 25. The reason that so few gait cycles are detected in Neri's recordings is that he frequently changed the direction of the steps and rarely took at least two steps to the front, which is needed to detect one

gait cycle. This also explains the lack of area in the click track visualization and the diverse area in the second musical stimulus.

81 We also decided to exclude the click track data from this further analysis.

82 The distance between the ankle joints (calculated from the markers AnkleOut and AnkleIn) is based on the MoCap Toolbox function mcmarkerdist(). The calculated ankle joint is located midway between the inner and outer ankles, which explains how the distance can never approach 0 and has a minimum of slightly more than 10 cm for the followers and about 20 cm for the leaders in our measurements. This can be explained by the wider shoes and flat, broad heels that the leaders wear.

83 Detected gait cycles in regular walking: Marco: 22; Maya: 17; Neri: 34; Yanina: 39.

84 The small first peak at about 20% in the heel speed graph is the point at which the weight is shifted to the front leg, which causes a slight imbalance and compensating motions in the foot with floor contact.

85 I am aware that the measurements here should be seen in relation to other hip movements, but as in all other cases of our analysis, we did not strive for exactness, as would be expected in biomechanical measurements for clinical studies. Instead, we decided to focus on features that seem of particular relevance in tango walking.

86 We measured the lateral pelvic tilt by calculating a vector from the right hip (a calculated joint based on "WaistRfront" and "WaistRback") to the left hip (joint based on "WaistLfront" and WaistLback"). Calculated joints as reference points are computed as the centroid between several markers as defined by Burger and Toiviainen (2013). This vector is then projected to the floor by setting the z axis to 0 to yield a floor vector. In the next step, the angle between the original vector and the floor vector is calculated.

87 Two vectors were calculated that point from knee to hip and knee to ankle. The angle between the two vectors is computed by dividing the dot product of the vectors by their magnitude and taking the arc cosine: $\theta = \arccos(a.b/|a|.|b|)$.

88 "Root" is a calculated point in the lower torso based on the four hip markers (WaistLFront, WaistRFront, WaistLBack, WaistRBack), which enables us to see the speed with which the torso moves in space. Root speed is calculated the same way as heel speed based on the MoCap Toolbox functions mctimeder() (accurate version) and mcnorm().

89 The detected gait cycles of backward steps (click, "Recuerdo", "Graz 1", individual favorite) were Cristina: 9, 12, 13, 11; Maja: 24, 41, 41, 44; Yanina: 6, 21, 12, 24.

90 To analyze the forward steps, we used the single recordings, because in the couple dancing, the followers made almost no forward steps.

91 The detection of "initial impact" is not as precise in the backward step as it is in the forwad step, because when the maximum distance between the heel of the moving leg and the ankle of the standing leg is reached, the toes have already had contact and the dancers may have started to shift their weight. Because the three followers all wear high heels, the (time and space) difference between the two events is minor. Nevertheless, this inaccuracy in calculation explains why the heel seems to move, although the leg should still be in the first 10% of the gait cycle.

92 See the "knee angle" graphic that follows for the exact moment when the leg is fully stretched.

93 The dancers all carried out different numbers of repetitions, as seen in Figure 4.28.
94 Remember that a stretched leg is indicated by an angle between 160 and 170 degrees. The deviation from absolute 180-degree straightness is caused by the positioning of the markers.
95 There are, of course, many more possible pivoting techniques. In comparing tango to other movement forms for the sake of clarification, I use only those of which I have thorough knowledge; my first dancing experiences were in classical ballet (12 years of education at the Royal Academy of Dance in Berlin).
96 Note that Cristina and, to some extent, Homer stretch both legs slightly during the turn and bend them again before proceeding to the step.
97 Parts of this section have been covered in a recent publication in which I compare mocap analysis options with Labanotation (Stepputat 2021).
98 The shoulder line is based on the calculated left and right shoulder joints (based on ShoulderBack and ShoulderTop) combined with the neck, which is calculated based on "ShoulderLTop" and "ShoulderRTop". The alignment of the right and left shoulder is indicated by the vector from the neck out toward the shoulder joint.
99 The hip line is based on the "root" (left and right WaistFront and WaistBack) in combination with the left and right hip (based on the respective WaistFront and WaistBack).
100 The calculation is based on the vector dot product between corresponding shoulder (v1) and hip vectors (v2). The positive and negative degrees result from the way the angle was calculated in MATLAB, where the angle is "measured in a counterclockwise direction from v1 to v2. If that angle would exceed 180 degrees, then the angle is measured in the clockwise direction but given a negative value" (Stafford, 24 February 2014; see https://de.mathworks.com/matlabcentral/answers/180131-how-cani-find-the-angle-between-two-vectors-including-directional-information).
101 Cristina's graph is different because she did not stay in one place but moved forward on the floor.
102 We decided to capture the foot movement instead of finger tapping because this movement is closer to the actual tango dance task. In addition, dancers were already equipped with the relevant mocap markers, which reduced the preparation and lab times and made it more convenient for the participants.
103 See Burger et al. (2013) for an investigation of preferred tapping beat tempo by humans and its relation to natural walking (at around 120 bpm). Tango tempo lies exactly within this range, though by convention, tango steps are carried out half time (every second of 120 beats).
104 See https://sonicvisualiser.org/.
105 Also see Stepputat et al. (2019, 17–18).
106 *Der Erfolg ihrer Auftritte wird folglich nicht in der Virtuosität komplizierter Schrittmuster und akrobatischer Elemente gemessen, sondern an dem musikalisch-interpretativen Gehalt der tänzerischen Bewegungen.*
107 *El caminar bien el tango, sin que de ello resulte una forma de baile repetitiva y sin gracia, supone jugar con el ritmo de la música y responder a él sin reproducirlo con exactitud.*
108 *Incorporación . . . del modelo presentado por el maestro.*
109 *La danse du couple, interprétée dans l'improvisation, devient extraordinairement musicale, se faisant aussi complexe que le sont les musiques de tango.*

C'est évidemment ce dialogue entre les couples et la musique qui lorsqu'il se réalise confère à cette danse son caractère sublime.

110 *Sabían cuándo se produciría un acorde determinado, cuándo una pausa, cuándo un cambio de ritmo, cuándo un sonido se alargaría en el tiempo y cuándo se detendría de forma abrupta. Este conocimiento les permitía bailar creativamente, ya sea—según los casos—pisando en la primera y la tercera nota del compás, introduciendo síncopas y silencios, imprimiendo vértigo a los movimientos en las variaciones, o pasando de la interpretación de uno a otro instrumento de la orquesta.*

111 The generation of tango dancers who started to dance in Europe in the 1980s had a difficult time in this respect. Few recordings of tango music were available internationally. Since then, both the accessibility and the amount of available tango recordings suitable for dancing have increased enormously.

112 Tango musicality classes have started to appear in the last decade. They provide an economic opportunity for teachers as well as mirror the trend toward a reconnection and re-valuation of tango music by translocal tango dancers; see Stepputat (2020) for a thorough exploration of the topic.

113 Though I appreciate Kent's attempt to explain music in lay terms and applaud his general approach, he unfortunately conveys some significant misconceptions of (tango) music and its principles, which might be even more confusing than helpful at times for dancers eager to learn about the music.

114 https://bautanz.com/argentine-tango-technique/musicality/.

115 *Reglas fijas para interpretar coreográficamente la musica.*

116 Most films included here and high-quality recordings of many more performances are online in the 030tango YouTube channel, hosted by Jonas Zadow (Berlin), also at www.030tango.com.

117 See https://youtu.be/dHGZ2Ph12bU, also https://youtu.be/IM0CaRFGNJk.

118 See https://youtu.be/3v--CtoKKtk and https://youtu.be/MtfIXgOetfk.

119 See https://youtu.be/A1TNjNqJCjs and https://youtu.be/vX7VjmQBD2E.

120 See https://youtu.be/TslHieDSkgo and https://youtu.be/4H3esVrIA4k.

121 See https://youtu.be/BG1CDN_82tU and https://youtu.be/nckSn1HRQ-c.

122 See https://youtu.be/rYy2N5EeFT4 and https://youtu.be/He7d1RqNqlc.

123 See, for instance, Maja and Marko: https://youtu.be/oFHynrVlbt4; Yanina and Neri: https://youtu.be/RhIi2MNBLmo; and Cristina and Homer: https://youtu.be/TKsOSmyY22U.

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5 Tango Music–Dance Relations: Toward a Conclusion

"Some people don't dance if they don't know who's singing—Why ask your head, it's your hips that are swinging".[1] These are my favorite lines from the Propellerheads featuring Shirley Bassey hit "History Repeating" from 1997. A general phenomenon in many dance styles is that dancers prefer music they know over music they have not previously heard. Not surprisingly, I could demonstrate that this is also true for tango dancers and the music they like to dance to. But sometimes, dancers experience an unfamiliar piece at a *milonga* and feel it "swings their hips",[2] or, to use a picture more suited for tango dancing, it lets them enjoy dancing to this track so much that they want to hear and dance to it again, even if they did not previously know it existed.

Music that makes you want to dance, in whatever style or genre, can be called danceable music. In this book, I have shown that in tango, *danceability* stands for exactly this: the ability of a musical piece to make a dancer want to get up and dance tango to it. With experience, dancers gather a passive knowledge of tango music, so they are inherently aware what tracks they prefer but are not necessarily able to verbalize and theorize why. In an embodied way, they know that there are parts and phrases, or cadences that lead into the next part or mark the end, and they find this even in music they have never heard before. The judgment as to whether music is danceable is highly dependent on an individual's taste, knowledge, and experience. However, there are also normative forces that shape an individual's judgment of what is tango-danceable. The more a dancer is integrated into the (local and/or) translocal community, the more general trends within the group influence their knowledge, taste, and preferences in music selection. In addition, some respected members of the translocal tango dance community have considerable influence on overall opinions about danceable music. These are the tango DJs who tour internationally, and local as well as touring tango dance teachers. By selecting tango music for *milongas*, *prácticas*, and classes, tango DJs and dance teachers actively shape what tango dancers know, are used to, and thereby consider easy

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to dance. In this respect, the question "*what* defines danceability" should be complemented with "*who* defines danceability". Yet the "who" is of course based on the "what". What DJs select must still be compatible with tango dancing and fulfil certain criteria to be appreciated. As my analysis shows, these include an absolute tempo suitable for tango walking (around 120 bpm), rhythmic stability, even bar and phrase structure, a clearly perceptible beat, a clearly perceptible melody, and harmonic stability. This predictability is an important foundation for dancers to feel comfortable and acquire the freedom to jointly improvise to the music. However, a piece following just these rules will be perfectly danceable—but probably quite boring. The right balance between straightforward clarity on the one hand and musical complexity on the other hand is what makes a piece not simply danceable but a favorite for the dancers.

Toward the end of a long interview with bandoneonist Michael Dolak, we got into recap mode. The following dialogue precisely captures the perspective of the dancers and the musicians on a qualitatively high tango from the "danceable" repertoire:

KS: After all, the art of a "tango dance hit" is to find the balance between transparency and complexity. Why is di Sarli exciting for beginners and professionals? Because it has everything in it. It has a clear beat so that beginners can walk on it, and it has complicated little musical things that are still exciting for people who have been dancing for 20 years. I think that is what makes tango really danceable, that there is a little bit of everything and nothing too much or too little.

MD: From a musician's point of view, that's also a good summary! For example, I don't enjoy playing the bandoneon just "uff uff uff" all evening. But of course it wouldn't be fun for me either to deliver just crazy stuff where I notice that everyone is just stumbling around on the dance floor. Exactly to find this middle way, that it remains musically interesting, . . . and still satisfies all these other things, that would also make the tango music hit. And actually it does! When you get around a lot, when you listen to the DJs, you notice that there are certain tangos, in certain recordings, that are played at every milonga, no matter where you go. And most of these hits do just that! They are musically varied and pleasant to listen to and yet have a clear structure.[3]

Tango recordings that are regularly played by tango DJs and dance teachers, as well as performed in transcribed form by contemporary tango musicians, fulfil all musical aspects of a danceable tango.[4] Dancers favor them because the pieces are well-known and predictable. Yet they would not be selected if they did not have the necessary musical prerequisites to inspire

dancers. True tango dance hits provide a regular structure enabling beginners to tag along and experts to build upon, as well as frequent complexities, which beginners can ignore—thanks to the underlying regularity—and experts can exploit in improvisation. To go back to the initial quote from the "History Repeating" track: an unfamiliar tango can still be enjoyable to dance to because it fulfils the basic musical criteria of a danceable tango and provides clarity and complexity at the same time.

In short, what is considered tango-danceable is always an interplay of individual taste, experience, and normative forces, under the precondition that predictable musical features are present that are needed to carry out the tango movement repertoire in improvisation.

Just as tango social dancing is tightly bound to tango music played for dancing, so is tango musicality tightly connected to tango danceability. Tango musicality refers to the ability to use tango movement repertoire in a way that embodies and thereby visualizes musical features through dancing. I demonstrated that musical dancing is much more than walking to a beat, although this is fundamental for all music–dance relations in tango. Instead, musicality in tango means to use improvisational skills to connect to the music—the better-known and predictable the music, the easier this is—on a variety of levels, including structural, melodic, and rhythmical. In addition to the predictability, musicality in dancing also needs complexity in the music, because interesting musical elements invite interesting movement interpretations, far beyond basic walking and turning. In the last section of the dance chapter, I have shown that several typical movements unambiguously relate to particular musical elements. These serve the current tango dance community as a canon to select from and as a reference framework for judging others regarding their musicality level while watching them. However, a good, musical dancer is not someone who uses these canon movements exactly in every possible situation. Musicality is an individual approach and can have many embodied expressions, depending also on the interaction within a couple in their joint improvisation, the changes between movements, and the invention of new possibilities. In addition, over time, and with growing experience both in dancing and in listening to tango music, a dancer's musicality evolves. This is also connected to a dancer's judgment of danceability, which can be directly related to their movement preferences and abilities—that is, their range and choice of movement repertoire—in order to interpret the music.

In short, tango musicality is the individual, and continually developing, ability to physically interpret musical features based on, but not limited to, a canon of movements that express melodic, rhythmic, and structural elements in an embodied, visual way.

In current translocal tango dance practice, the preferred music to dance to is selected recordings from the *época de oro*, because these fulfil all the

criteria for danceable tango music, and dancers have mostly developed their musicality around this selection. In addition, recent decades have seen an increasing number of tango ensembles developing a repertoire suitable for dancing. Taking all problematic issues like financing, prejudices about live music by dancers, and lack of competence in playing for dancers aside, now, almost 100 years after its golden age, tango as social dance and tango music played for dancing are alive and thriving. In this book, I have shown that on a choreomusical level, the prerequisite for an ongoing, working relation between tango music/musicians and tango dance/dancers is the understanding and appreciation of the other's art and needs, respectively. If dancers are educated in music and have the ability to listen to and understand tango music, they enhance their musical dancing as well as their judgment of danceability. If musicians learn to dance themselves, gather embodied knowledge about tango, and experience in playing for dancers, their music is more danceable and, at the same time, musically interesting.

Altogether, we see that tango music and dance, musicians and dancers, musicality and danceability are interwoven, co-dependent, and mutually influential on the way social tango dance is practiced translocally. To study these essential relations in depth, I employed a transdisciplinary approach, combining ethnochoreology and ethnomusicology toward choreomusicology, as well as integrating qualitative and quantitative data-driven research methods. Not only the methods and concepts but also academic language differ among disciplines, which can make it difficult to cross boundaries between these disciplines. My aim was to write this book in a way that all contents and chapters are accessible to music and dance scholars alike, using terminology and explanations that should give access to the findings even if a reader is more versed in one or the other discipline. Additionally, I put emphasis on writing about the quantitative data analysis sections in a way that is accessible to scholars from academic fields in which empirical research is rarely carried out. I hope this book provides insights into tango music–dance relations on a structural and social level and, above that, inspires scholars to venture into choreomusical aspects of performing arts.

Notes

1 Lyrics written by Alex Gifford.
2 In the section on movement details in tango, I show that controlled hip movement (pelvic tilt) is an important element of tango walking, though active, visible hip "swinging" is, of course, not part of tango movement repertoire.
3 KS: Letztendlich ist doch die Kunst des "Tango Tanzhits", die Balance zu finden zwischen Durchsichtigkeit und Komplexität. Warum ist di Sarli für Anfänger und für Profis spannend? Weil er alles drin hat. Er hat den klaren Beat, so dass Anfänger darauf laufen können, und er hat komplizierte musikalische Kleinigkeiten, die für Leute, die schon 20 Jahre tanzen, immer noch spannend sind. Das

ist, glaub ich, was einen wirklich tanzbaren tango ausmacht, dass von allem ein bisschen da ist und von nichts zu viel oder zu wenig.

MD: Das ist aus Musikersicht auch eine gute Zusammenfassung! Es macht zum Beispiel mir auch keinen Spaß am Bandoneon den ganzen Abend nur "uff uff uff" zu spielen. Aber natürlich würde es mir auch keinen Spaß machen irgendwelches nur crazy Zeugs abzuliefern, wo ich merke, alle stolpern auf der Tanzfläche nur rum. Genau da diesen Mittelweg zu finden dass es auch musikalisch interessant bleibt, . . . und trotzdem all diese anderen Sachen zu bedienen, das würde auch den Tango *Musikhit* ausmachen. Und machts tatsächlich auch! Wenn man viel rumkommt, wenn man dann die DJs hört, merkt man schon, es gibt ganz spezielle tangos, in ganz speziellen Aufnahmen, die laufen auf jeder *milonga*, egal wo man hinkommt. Und die meisten dieser Hits erfüllen auch genau das! Sie sind musikalisch abwechslungsreich und angenehm zu hören, und haben dennoch eine klare Struktur.

4 Sometimes tango recordings that do not fulfil these musical criteria and might even seem to be rather simple nevertheless end up in "heavy rotation". However, such hits are mostly rather short-lived.

Spanish Summary: Baile y Música de Tango: Una Exploración Coreomusical del Tango Argentino en Europa

Resumen en Español por Juan Bermúdez

La música de tango para bailar es sólo uno entre muchos estilos de música de tango, de la misma manera que el baile social de tango es sólo un estilo entre muchos estilos de la práctica de baile del tango. Este libro se ocupa exclusivamente de estas dos prácticas: la música de tango para bailar y el tango como práctica de baile social, así como la forma en que estos géneros se relacionan entre sí. Mi enfoque en el estudio del tango es coreomusical. La coreomusicología pretende unir el estudio de la música y el baile y sus interrelaciones. Entiendo al tango de una manera holística, sin separar la práctica del baile de la música, centrándome en ambos aspectos con una profundidad similar. Este libro se enfoca en las prácticas translocales y cosmopolitas del tango en Europa.

El tango argentino llegó a Europa por primera vez durante la primera década del siglo XX, provocando un frenesí por este género en París, lo que a su vez reforzó la popularidad del tango en Argentina. El tango ha permanecido en Europa desde entonces y, al mismo tiempo, las influencias europeas han moldeado la práctica del tango en Argentina en una relación recíproca. Hace ya cuarenta años desde que el baile de tango experimentó un gran renacimiento tanto en Argentina como en Europa. Durante este tiempo, la comunidad de bailarines de tango no ha dejado de crecer en Europa, existiendo en la actualidad en casi todas las ciudades europeas al menos un lugar donde se puede aprender y bailar tango con regularidad.

Panorama Coreomusical Del Desarrollo Del Tango Argentino 1900–2020

El *tango argentino* es una práctica bailo-musical, la cual inició su desarrollo a finales del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX en la zona del Río de la Plata, entre Argentina y Uruguay. En aquella época, las ciudades de Buenos Aires y Montevideo experimentaron una inmigración masiva procedente de Europa, produciendo la unión de prácticas locales, tanto criollos, indígenas y de esclavos africanos, con la de los emigrantes europeos.

Este nuevo género bailo-musical, que luego sería conocido como *tango*, prosperó en estas circunstancias y gracias a su distribución mediática, se puso rápidamente de moda en Europa, convirtiéndose a lo largo del siglo XX y de lo que va del siglo XXI en uno de los géneros bailo-musicales más populares internacionalmente. Durante su conquista del mercado internacional a principios del siglo XX, al tango se le fue agregado el denominador "argentino", vinculándolo estrechamente al Estado-nación de Argentina y omitiendo con ello a Uruguay de su imaginario.

La *época de oro* del tango en Buenos Aires se extendió desde mediados de los años treinta hasta principios de los años cincuenta. Los años durante y después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial fueron económicamente estables para Argentina gracias a su neutralidad en la guerra y a su condición como un importante exportador agrícola, lo que se vio traducido en una estabilidad social y política, la cual llevaría al florecimiento de la vida sociocultural porteña, incluidas las orquestas de tango y los eventos de baile. Tras un periodo de auge y estabilidad, turbulencias políticas y económicas suscitaron un declive en la popularidad y la práctica de baile del tango en Argentina. La música de tango, sin embargo, siguió escuchándose y tocándose tanto en Argentina como en Europa. En este sentido, la década de 1960 fue la época en la que la práctica musical de las orquestas típicas y las prácticas de baile del tango empezaron a separarse. Sería apenas en la década de 1980 cuando la práctica de baile del tango resurgiría en ambos lados del Atlántico, seguida por el creciente flujo intercontinental de practicantes de tango. El interés por el tango de parte de practicantes extranjeros incitó el surgimiento de una infraestructura de enseñanza y baile de tango en Buenos Aires, la "meca del tango", la cual pudiera satisfacer las necesidades de un público cada vez más cosmopolita. El impulso generado en estos años se reforzó en los años 90, fomentando una tendencia hacia la profundización y concienciación del interés, el conocimiento y la destreza en el tango, la cual llevó tanto a la práctica musical como a la práctica de baile del tango a diversificarse.

Si bien, la crisis económica del 2000 en Argentina mermó el impulso generado en los años anteriores, una vez superada esta, la tendencia ascendente de las prácticas musicales y de baile del tango, tanto en Argentina como translocalmente, retomaron su auge. Por un lado, los conjuntos musicales se enfocaron en diversos estilos de tango concertantes. De lado de las prácticas de baile podemos observar una creciente libertad en la exploración del movimiento que llevó a esta a convertirse en un arte del movimiento por derecho propio. Por el otro lado, en el otro extremo del espectro de la exploración del movimiento y la música de tango, se desarrolló el estilo *milonguero*; estilo con un repertorio de movimiento minimalista relacionado con la música de tango de la *época de oro* o interpretada por conjuntos de tango contemporáneos en ese estilo. Hoy en

día, estas prácticas musicales y de baile siguen desarrollándose y diversificándose. Las diversas distinciones en la práctica de baile (*tango de salón, milonguero, neotango*) y en la práctica musical (para bailar, para concierto) siguen vigentes formando dos continuos interrelacionados.

La Música De Tango y Su Bailabilidad

Para entender qué elementos de la música son calificados como bailables por los bailarines de tango me he aproximado a este fenómeno a través de dos caminos diferentes. Por un lado, me he enfocado en el conocimiento de los practicantes, especialmente en entrevistas con DJs de tango y en declaraciones hechas por bailarines profesionales de tango publicadas en algunos blogs públicos en internet. Basado en esto podemos decir que las razones para juzgar a una pieza de tango como bailable o no dependen principalmente de características musicales como un tempo absoluto de alrededor de 120 bmp y un pulso estable y claramente perceptible. Importante son también las variaciones dentro de las estructuras predecibles; el tango no debe ser ni demasiado complejo ni demasiado simple en términos de interpretación melódica, armónica y rítmica. En general, las grabaciones de la *época de oro* se consideran más bailables en comparación con grabaciones más recientes. Esto se debe fundamentalmente a que las grabaciones de esta época son el resultado de la práctica músico-dancística como conjunto existente antes de la separación de estas prácticas musicales y de baile en el tango. Siendo, además, estas grabaciones utilizadas a menudo para ejemplificar la bailabilidad en el tango. Cabe remarcar, que los conocimientos, habilidades y experiencia individuales, tanto dancísticas como auditivas, conforman las bases de lo que los bailarines consideran bailable. Bailarines en diferentes etapas de su desarrollo tienen diferentes necesidades y habilidades para la interpretación musical en su repertorio de movimiento y por lo tanto consideran la bailabilidad de la música de tango de manera diferente. Por último, el gusto individual juega un papel importante a la hora de juzgar a la música como bailable.

Por el otro lado, después de examinar las definiciones de bailabilidad hechas por los DJs y bailarines profesionales de tango, me enfoque en diseños experimentales para determinar la bailabilidad en un nivel más cuantitativo. El primer experimento fue una encuesta en línea sobre la bailabilidad de piezas de *época de oro*, contemporáneas, y *no-tangos*. Los resultados de esta encuesta muestran que el gusto individual y las fuerzas socio-normativas influyen en el juicio individual sobre la bailabilidad del tango. Además, es posible detectar una fuerte relación entre conocer una pieza y el juzgarla como bailable. El segundo experimento tuvo como objetivo explorar las respuestas corporales de los bailarines de tango a la música de tango. Cuatro tangos compuestos exclusivamente para este

propósito fueron calificados por los participantes según su bailabilidad. Aquí fue interesante observar que la composición experimental de tango con armonías inusualmente complejas obtuvo la puntuación más baja del experimento. Lo que nos muestra que si la música saca a los bailarines de su "zona de confort armónico" estos no se pueden relajar ni tampoco pueden disfrutar de la música de un modo que les haga considerarla bailable. De la misma manera fue posible observar que si las frases musicales terminan en momentos inesperados o las estructuras melódicas carecen de momentos de relajación o descansos, la música se considera menos bailable. Estos resultados dan una idea concreta de dónde se encuentran los límites musicales de la música de tango para bailar. Finalmente, pregunté a músicos contemporáneos de tango sobre el tema de la bailabilidad. Los músicos contemporáneos tienen sus propias razones y métodos que aplican para tocar para un público que baila. Un aspecto importante de este enfoque es aprender a bailar ellos mismos y conocer bien el material de *época de oro* para entender las necesidades de los bailarines.

El Baile Del Tango y Su Musicalidad

Para entender qué elementos del baile son calificados como musicales por los bailarines de tango me he centrado en el repertorio de movimientos del tango, partiendo de sus elementos básicos: postura, caminar y pivotear. Estos tres elementos constituyen los elementos fundamentales sobre los que se construyen todos los demás principios de movimiento en el tango. Como cualquier estilo de movimiento y música, no son sólo los movimientos, sino la forma de llevarlos a cabo lo que define en gran medida el género. En el tango, se trata de adornos de pasos realizados por uno o ambos bailarines para "condimentar" los movimientos e interpretar la música de forma corporal. Una de las principales características estéticas del tango es la estabilidad horizontal al caminar, lo que les da a los movimientos de la pareja un carácter "deslizante". Otro principio importante es la incorporación de pausas, o momentos de *quietud en tensión*, en el baile. Dado que el tango es un baile de pareja, los dos bailarines necesitan comunicarse entre sí a través de sus cuerpos, lo que se consigue mediante una micro acción constante destinada a mantener a los dos bailarines alineados uno frente al otro. Los bailarines entrenan sus reacciones físicas a los movimientos de su pareja hasta tal punto que se convierten en un conocimiento incorporado. Esta forma de comunicarse físicamente está estrechamente relacionada con los procesos de *liderar* y *seguir*. La improvisación conjunta en el tango siempre está guiada por influencias auditivas (música), visuales (espacio de baile) y corporales (pareja) externas. Los líderes aprenden a utilizar su repertorio de movimientos ad hoc en cualquier momento, reaccionando a las posibilidades y limitaciones

existentes, mientras que los seguidores aprenden a reaccionar a los impulsos del líder de diversas maneras, abriendo figuraciones improvisatorias como parte del diálogo corporal de la pareja.

A través de un análisis en profundidad con tecnología *motion capture* de los pasos hacia delante y hacia atrás, así como de la técnica de pivote en el *ocho* atrás y *ocho* adelante, analizo cómo los pasos de tango pueden diferenciarse de los pasos que usamos al caminar. Los pasos hacia adelante del tango son más grandes en relación con los pasos al caminar, la pierna libre está controlada, la pierna delantera está completamente estirada antes de que se desplace el peso, tanto los bailarines como las bailarinas hacen un uso activo del movimiento lateral de la cadera, y hay una mayor aceleración y desaceleración respecto a la velocidad inicial. En los pasos hacia atrás, el seguidor iguala el paso hacia delante del líder doblando más las rodillas de la pierna que lo sustenta para obtener un mayor alcance, mediante una velocidad de talón alta y controlada al principio del paso hacia atrás para dejar espacio a los pies del líder, y manteniendo al mismo tiempo la misma velocidad que la del líder. Al examinar la técnica de movimiento de *ocho* (adelante y atrás), es posible observar cómo se utiliza la disociación para generar energía de giro para un pivote. Los bailarines disocian las caderas de los hombros y realizan una contradisociación mientras pivotan, superponiendo sus movimientos de paso y pivote. Estas conclusiones nos ayudan a comprender qué opciones y limitaciones existen para relacionar los movimientos del tango con la música del tango.

De una manera similar analicé en profundidad detalles específicos del cómo se relacionan la música y el baile de tango. Utilizando asimismo la tecnología *capture motion* para medir cómo los bailarines profesionales de tango colocan sus pasos en relación con la música, analicé las relaciones entre los pasos y el compás. El experimento demostró que los bailarines relacionan el contacto inicial con el suelo de la pierna libre con el compás, mientras que el cambio de peso se produce después de este. Si bien, la relación paso-compás es la base del baile de tango, esta sólo es la base a partir de la cual los bailarines de tango desarrollan su musicalidad. Los bailarines avanzados no se centran en relacionar sus pasos con el compás; esta relación subyace en sus movimientos como una orientación, la cual no tiene que efectuarse en todo momento. Se consideran bailarines musicales aquellos que juegan con los detalles de la música, se relacionan con diferentes aspectos musicales además del ritmo y son capaces de transmitir emociones a través de su corporalidad encarnando su musicalidad. Basándose en una buena técnica y en la capacidad de improvisar junto a un compañero, los bailarines aprenden a centrarse en la música, liberándose de cualquier preocupación por "cuestiones técnicas de movimiento". No menos importante es el conocimiento profundo de la música de tango, basado en el repertorio y en una comprensión fundamental

del funcionamiento interno de la música de tango. Con la experiencia, los bailarines adquieren este conocimiento profundo de la música de tango, no necesariamente explícito, pero existente. Entienden que hay partes y frases, cadencias que conducen a otras secciones o que marcan un final, y las perciben incluso en músicas desconocidas.

Relaciones Entre El Baile-Música De Tango—Una Conclusión

La estimación de la música como bailable depende en gran medida del gusto, el conocimiento y la experiencia individuales. Sin embargo, también hay fuerzas normativas que determinan la opinión de un individuo sobre lo que es bailable en el tango. Al seleccionar la música de tango para las *milongas*, las *prácticas*, y las clases, los DJs y los profesores de tango configuran activamente lo que los bailarines de tango conocen, a lo que están acostumbrados y, por tanto, lo que consideran fácil de bailar. En este sentido, la pregunta "*qué* define lo bailable" debería complementarse con "quién lo define así". Sin embargo, el "quién" se basa, por supuesto, en el "qué". Lo que los DJ seleccionan debe seguir siendo compatible con las prácticas dancísticas del tango y cumplir ciertos criterios para ser apreciado. Como demuestra mi análisis, estos criterios incluyen un tempo absoluto adecuado para el tango andante (alrededor de 120 bpm), estabilidad rítmica y armónica, una estructura de compases y frases uniforme, un ritmo y melodía claramente perceptible. Esta previsibilidad es una base importante para que los bailarines se sientan cómodos y tengan la libertad de improvisar conjuntamente con la música. Sin embargo, una pieza que sólo siga estas reglas será perfectamente bailable, pero probablemente aburrida. El equilibrio adecuado entre la previsibilidad, por un lado, y la complejidad musical, por el otro, es lo que hace que una pieza no sólo sea bailable, sino que los bailarines la adoren. Pudiendo hablar entonces de una interacción entre el gusto individual, la experiencia y las fuerzas normativas, con la condición previa de que estén presentes las características musicales predecibles necesarias para llevar a cabo el repertorio de movimiento del tango durante la improvisación.

Así como el baile social del tango está estrechamente ligado a la música de tango que se toca para bailar, la musicalidad del tango está estrechamente ligada a la bailabilidad del tango. La musicalidad en el tango significa usar las habilidades de improvisación para conectarse con la música en una variedad de niveles, incluyendo el estructural, melódico y rítmico. Además de la previsibilidad, la musicalidad en el baile también necesita complejidad en la música, porque los elementos musicales interesantes invitan a interpretaciones de movimiento interesantes, mucho más allá de caminar y girar. Varios movimientos típicos se relacionan inequívocamente con elementos musicales particulares. Sin embargo, la musicalidad

es un enfoque individual y puede tener muchas expresiones corporales, dependiendo también de la interacción dentro de una pareja en su improvisación conjunta, la alteración de los movimientos y la invención de nuevas posibilidades. La musicalidad del tango es la capacidad individual, en continuo desarrollo, de interpretar físicamente características musicales basadas, aunque no limitadas, a un canon de movimientos que expresan elementos melódicos, rítmicos y estructurales de forma encarnada y visual.

A nivel coreomusical, el prerrequisito para una relación continua y de trabajo entre la música/músicos de tango y el baile/bailarines de tango es la comprensión y apreciación del arte y las necesidades del otro. Si los bailarines son educados en música y tienen la habilidad de escuchar y entender la música de tango, mejoran su baile musical, así como su juicio de bailabilidad. Si los músicos aprender a bailar ellos mismos, adquieren conocimientos sobre el tango y experiencia tocando para bailarines, su música es más bailable y al mismo tiempo musicalmente interesante. En conjunto, vemos que las prácticas musicales y de baile del tango, los músicos y los bailarines, la musicalidad y la bailabilidad están entrelazados, son codependientes y se influyen mutuamente en la forma en que se practica el baile social del tango.

Accompanying Material

Graz 1—the "ideal" tango (recording)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Musicians: Robert Schmidt (piano), Michael Dolak (bandoneon), Peter Blazeowsky (double bass), Matthias Leupold (violin)
Recording and mixing: Ulrich Katzenberger
Recorded in Graz, November 2016
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121089

Graz 1—the "ideal" tango (score)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Original score by Robert Schmidt
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121088

Graz 2—the "uneven phrases" tango (recording)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Musicians: Robert Schmidt (piano), Michael Dolak (bandoneon), Peter Blazeowsky (double bass), Matthias Leupold (violin)
Recording and mixing: Ulrich Katzenberger
Recorded in Graz, November 2016
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121090

Graz 2—the "uneven phrases" tango (score)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Original score by Robert Schmidt
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121091

Graz 3—the "unusual harmonies" tango (recording)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Musicians: Robert Schmidt (piano), Michael Dolak (bandoneon), Peter Blazeowsky (double bass), Matthias Leupold (violin)

Recording and mixing: Ulrich Katzenberger
Recorded in Graz, November 2016
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121092

Graz 3—the "unusual harmonies" tango (score)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Original score by Robert Schmidt.
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121093

Graz 4—the "melodic complexity" tango (recording)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Musicians: Robert Schmidt (piano), Michael Dolak (bandoneon), Peter Blazeowsky (double bass), Matthias Leupold (violin)
Recording and mixing: Ulrich Katzenberger
Recorded in Graz, November 2016
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121094

Graz 4—the "melodic complexity" tango (score)

Composer: Robert Schmidt
Original score by Robert Schmidt
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121095

***Forward Tango Steps* (film)**

Dancer: Yanina Quiñones
Film and editing: Neri Píliu
Recorded in January 2021
Yanina Quiñones demonstrates forward (*adelante*) tango steps.
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121096

***Backward Tango Steps* (film)**

Dancer: Yanina Quiñones
Film and Editing: Neri Píliu
Recorded in January 2021
Yanina Quiñones demonstrates backward (*atrás*) tango steps.
https://phaidra.kug.ac.at/o:121097

Glossary

Adorno—embellishment (of dance movements)
Arrastre—Spanish "to drag"; expression for a musical feature in tango, the rhythmic anticipation of the attack note
Bordoneo—rhythmical pattern, a form of tango accompaniment in the bass
Cabeceo—Spanish "nod"; sign of accepting an invitation to dance from afar, reaction to a *mirada*
Códigos—Spanish "codes"; referring to codes of conduct on and off the dance floor at a *milonga*
Colgada—Spanish "hanging"; off-axis dance movement in which the dance partners share weight by leaning out, keeping the feet close to the partner, forming a V shape
Corte—Spanish "cut"; a sudden stop in a movement while dancing tango; together with *quebradas* movements from early tango repertoire considered "immoral"
Cortina—Spanish "curtain"; a short piece of music played between two *tandas* to mark the end of one and beginning of the next, often used as time to change partners
Criollo, criolla—descendants of early European settlers and indigenous inhabitants; also used as adjective for "traditional, native, local" Argentinian
Cross—(*cruce*) dance movement in which the follower crosses legs and shifts weight onto the closed front foot in double time
Encuentro milonguero—Spanish "*milonguero* meeting"; tango event with restricted access for tango dancers preferring to dance in close embrace and to music from the *época de oro*
Época de oro—Spanish "golden age"; time period of the mid-1930s to early 1950s considered to be the historical climax of tango music and dance development in Buenos Aires
Estilo milonguero—*milonguero* dance style, term developed in the 1990s to capture close-embrace dancing, referencing the *época de oro* dance tradition

Fraseo—metrically flexible phrasing of a melody in tango
Gancho—dance movement, a quick bending of the knee of the free leg, "wrapping" the leg around the partner's leg(s)
Giro—dance movement sequence that combines steps and pivots into a joint turn around a central axis by the couple
Habanera—music and dance genre in 2/4 meter, as rhythmic formula also used in tango *milonga* **pieces**
Marcato in dos—Spanish "marked in two"; accentuation of the first and the third beat in a bar
Marcato in cuatro—Spanish "marked in four"; accentuation of all four beats in a bar with mostly equal strength
Milonga—Tango dance event; also a genre of tango music played in a 2/4 meter
Milonguera, milonguero—someone dancing tango in *milonga* surroundings; as adjective added to anything considered to be valuing historically sanctioned rules on and off the *milonga* dance floor
Mirada—Spanish "gaze" or "glance"; the establishing of eye contact between two dancers to ask for a dance, followed by *cabeceo* if both are interested in dancing together
Neotango—dance style developed in the 1990s, making use of open embrace, including off-axis and more space-consuming movements
Ocho adelante—dance movement, a "forward eight"; combination of a turn on one leg and a forward step, repeated on the other foot
Ocho atrás—dance movement, a "backward eight"; combination of a turn on one leg and a backward step, repeated on the other foot
Organito—barrel organ
Orquesta típica—tango orchestra; minimally consisting of one piano, one double bass, several bandoneons and violins, sometimes cello, viola, or further instruments; rarely percussion
Parada—dance movement in which the follower's flow of movements is stopped by the leader by blocking the follower's path with his free foot; the follower then steps over the leader's extended leg or foot
Payador—at the turn of the twentieth century, a man who sang improvised poetic songs accompanied by a guitar
Porteño, porteña—someone living in a port city; often used for people from Buenos Aires
Práctica—tango dance practice meeting
Quebrada—Spanish "break"; sudden movement stopping the movement flow in tango; see *corte*
Ronda—Spanish "circle of people"; the group of dance couples on the dance floor moving in a counterclockwise direction
Sacada—steps by either one of the dancers into the space of the partner
Tanda—a set of three or four tangos usually by the same tango orchestra played in a row at a *milonga*

Tango de salón—Spanish "tango of the dancehall"; currently attributed to a dance style that incorporates semi-open and close embrace, including complex movement sequences and putting emphasis on elegance and smoothness

Tango nuevo—Spanish "new tango"; music style initiated by Astor Piazzolla; also used for an open-embrace dance style; see *neotango*

Vals (criollo)—tango sub-gerne in 3/4 meter, combination of tango and Viennese waltz; in tango dancing, basic steps are only taken on the first beat of a bar

Voleo—dance movement, a quick bending and immediate stretching again of the free leg, causing a "hook" of the leg

Volcada—Spanish "tipped over"; dance movement off-axis in which both partners share weight by leaning against each other with their upper bodies, forming a ∧ shape

Yeites—percussive elements played on the instruments of the tango ensemble

Yumba—onomatopoetic word indicating the two accented elements "yum" (chord played on the first and third notes of a bar) and the "ba" (a tonal filler played on the second and fourth notes of a bar); also *yumbeado*

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