

Tango fans learn Latin moves downtown

The Tango Center, Eugene's only facility specializing in the Latin dance, features classes and open sessions

By **Natasha Chilingirian**
Pulse Reporter

Recreational dancers who are ready to move on from "bumping and grinding" at parties have a new option: getting down the sultry, Argentine way at The Tango Center downtown. The all-ages venue, located at 194 W. Broadway, opened in August and offers classes throughout the week, with open dances Friday and Saturday nights.

Tango Center founder Greg Bryant said he created the dance facility as a service to the community. Tango has been offered at various dance studios in Eugene, but The Tango Center is the first club in town specializing in the dance.

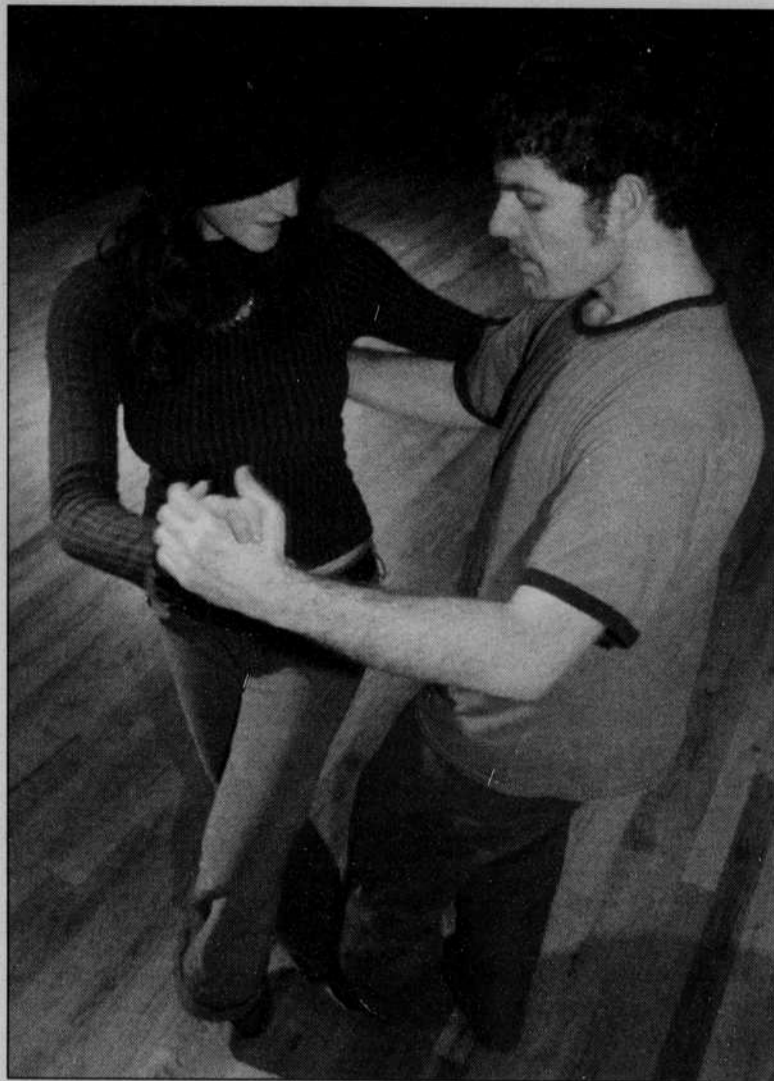
"It's the only street-level, downtown, all-volunteer dance venue in Eugene," Bryant said. "I wanted to create a place where people can dance tango on Friday and Saturday nights — when people feel like dancing."

He said that tango is a "very connected partner dance" and has a prominent place in the Eugene dance community. Eugene even has a tango band, Mood Area 52.

"The tango scene is quite robust for a town this size," he said.

Bryant said The Tango Center supports the musical side of tango as well — the venue hosts "tango jams," where audience members can learn the elements of tango tunes.

The introductory classes on Friday and Saturday nights begin at 8 p.m., followed by an open dance from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. The cost for the evening is \$5. For a complete class listing, visit the center's Web site at <http://www.tangocenter.org>.



Tim Bobosky Photographer

Rebecca Smith and Andrew McCollough have been tangoing for numerous years.

University dance Instructor Vicky Ayers, who fell in love with tango while visiting Argentina, recommends dancers of all levels experience the Latin moves. She said tango has a strong cultural background. It

was developed by young European men in the 1800s, who accompanied the moves with their native Italian and German music.

"Tango was born in the slums of Buenos Aires, at the height of the im-

migrant era," she said. "It was a reflection of a culture. It was a street dance about an intense connection with a partner."

She added that the familiar image of the rose in the mouth came much later.

"Tango was an icon in French cinema," she said. "The concept of the rose in the mouth was invented in Hollywood as an expression of the dancer's passion."

Ayers teaches beginning and intermediate tango in the University's Department of Dance. Both classes will be offered in the spring.

Tango Center dance instructor Andrew McCollough encourages dancers who are looking for a way to connect with people to try tango. He discovered the dance while attending the University of Arizona, where he witnessed the powerful moves of a tango dancer in a downtown club.

"Some people try tango because it's sensual, like love and passion, and because it's part of the Latin world," he said. "Other people take it because it's fun and good exercise, and some people take it for the music, which has a dark, melancholy flavor."

McCollough said tango music often features a "bandoneón," which is like an accordion, but purer and sweeter and with no keys. This can be accompanied by a piano and guitar or violin. He said the dance consists of improvised forward, back and side steps, which can match either the melody or rhythm of the music.

"(Dancing tango with a partner) is like dancing with who they are," he said. "It can be quiet, or it can be explosive, it's different with every person. It's a way to connect to the person's heart and soul."

Contact the Pulse reporter at natashachilingirian@dailyemerald.com.

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