

Debbie Goodwin, Director

A dancer since childhood, Debbie began teaching and performing Argentine tango in 1996. She studies continuously both here and in Buenos Aires with a variety of renowned Argentine tango masters. Along with her partner and husband, John Campbell, she developed Alma Del Tango, a Marin-based teaching program dedicated to the art of Argentine tango. They offer group and private instruction, workshops, performances and lecture-demonstrations emphasizing the social origins of the dance as well as contemporary social norms in the world of tango.

Building on a foundation of early training in jazz, tap and musical theater, Debbie earned her Bachelors Degree in Dance from California State University, Sacramento in 1998, and her Masters in Dance Education in 2001. Her Masters Thesis Project, the show ¡Tango! A Story of Sacramento's Argentine Tango Community played to sold-out houses in October 2001 and was followed by ¡Tango! Rhythms of the Heart the following year. She continues to create and produce sold out dance productions including Tango, A Romantic Ritual (Feb. 2008 & 2009, available on DVD), Tango House (July 2009) and All About Tango (2011). And, she dances the lead role of Antonia in the stage production Tango Fatal that premiered in San Francisco on December 11, 2011. Find out more at www.almadeltango.com

Debbie is also the organizing force behind Tango Con*Fusión, a company of all women, where she devotes her artistic attention as a choreographer and featured dancer. Since its inception in January, 2004, Tango Con*Fusión has performed original choreography in two groundbreaking all-female tango stage shows with live music and international casts. Tango Con*Fusión has also been featured in a documentary playing on the international tango film festival circuit and on national television networks. For more information please visit www.tangoconfusion.com.

Daniel Peters, Guest Artist

Daniel began his professional dance career in San Francisco dancing for Ed Mock and Company (1979 - 1981). After moving to New York's Lower East Side with the lovely and talented Pier Voukos, he began choreographing for White Dog and PS 122, as well as dancing in the companies of Donald Byrd and The Group, Rosalind Newman, and Jim Self. Daniel has studied tango with Christy Cote, Julian Miller Ramil and Homer Ladas. Mr. Peters is also a filmmaker. He makes 16mm silent tango films for live music performances and has worked with the tango band Trio Garufa.

Janet Lott, Guest Artist

Janet began dancing Argentine tango 15 years ago and has studied with some of the finest artists dancing today in Buenos Aires, Europe and the U.S. She spent many years directing, producing and choreographing for her own award winning contemporary dance company, Janet Lott and Dancers. Janet has served on the faculties of Naropa University (then Institute), the University of Colorado, Reed College and JFK University. She has an MFA in Dance from the California Institute of the Arts. Janet is a second generation Contact Improviser, having learned the form from Steve Paxton et al in 1972. In 2003 Janet qualified as a teacher of the Alexander Technique of neuromuscular movement retraining. She teaches tango and Alexander Technique, individually and together, in San Rafael and West Marin.

“Argentine tango, like Contact Improvisation and Alexander Technique, demands the dropping away of pretense. It demands presence, listening and the ability to respond accurately: willingness to meet another,” says Janet. These are ongoing practices for her.

Azure Devi Adornetto

Azure discovered Argentine tango in a ballroom dance class. The foxtrot and the two-step didn't really hook her, but tango did. So when the class ended, she continued to pursue tango with various teachers around the Bay Area and has danced off and on for the past six years. “The more I learn, the more I want to learn, there is so much nuance to the dance,” she says. To Azure, tango is like a private conversation in a secret language, and the secret language is the music. “The music catches you by the collar and wants to tell you a story, and you are the story because the story is the dance. You can spend your entire life learning how to dance that story ever more beautifully, ever more intricately, ever more playfully,” says Azure.

Jill Aggersbury

A Londoner, Jill set off on a journey around the world many years ago. In 1970, she came to California via Toronto, Calgary and New York, and fell in love with it. Since that time, she has continued her journey, travelling and working in many different parts of the United States and other countries, but she always returns to California. She is a Registered Nurse specializing in legal/medical consulting and life care planning. Jill has a love of dancing, and she has performed almost every kind of dance, but now her love is Argentine tango. She is drawn by its pulsating rhythms and sensuality. “One can leave behind the seriousness of the daytime professional persona and become a different person at night embracing the Latin culture, the rhythms and the movements,” says Jill.

Thora Blaine

Thora grew up in Hawaii and lives in Novato. She was drawn to Argentine tango by her love of dance, preferring tango to hula. She's been taking classes and attending milongas in the Bay Area and Buenos Aires for over three years. “Tango makes me feel alive and connected,” says Thora, who danced in last year's production of All About Tango. When she's not locked in the embrace of tango, Thora is busy pursuing her other passions—tennis, and spending time with her five grandchildren. Her past life includes being a U.C. grad with a degree in psychology, and a nutritionist.

Boyer Cole

A transplant from southern California, Boyer is a Naturopathic Medical Doctor practicing in San Anselmo. After three years of ballroom dancing, he discovered Debbie and John's Argentine tango classes and has been hooked ever since. He finds tango good exercise for his body and

mind. Boyer appeared in All About Tango in 2011. Although he's never been to Argentina, a tango trip to Buenos Aires is on his wish list.

Sammie Ellis

When Sammie was a little girl her father would have her stand on the tops of his feet while he danced her around. This experience, along with listening to the music of the big bands of the '30s and '40s instilled in her an early love for dancing. It wasn't until her early 60's, after raising five kids, completing a double master's degree and half her doctorate, and teaching for many years that she finally met up again with dancing. Then the dance bug bit her hard! Every week night was filled with lessons and the fabulous experience of moving to the beat of music. In January 2006, a friend introduced her to Argentine tango. By that March, she was in Buenos Aires at the CITA tango conference drinking in the wonder and beauty of the world of Argentine tango. This led to numerous hours spent with many wonderful teachers like Debbie and John. "The deep level of connection and subtle communication required of this dance is not only intriguing, but is truly intoxicating," says Sammie.

Sylvia Goodman

Perhaps it was the haunting soul sound of the bandoneón, or the playfulness of the milonga rhythm, or the sensuality of the tango itself, when at the first workshop she attended, Sylvia discovered that tango is more than a dance. "It is an expression of life in all its complexities set to music," she says. And for her, it was love at first step! In fact, she was so taken with it that she went on to receive her Argentine tango teacher's certificate from the Ballroom Teachers College in order to share her passion for this dance with her six granddaughters, should they have an interest. Sylvia is very happy to be a part of Tango Tales and to share her joy with a larger audience. "But most of all," says Sylvia, "I owe much love and gratitude to Will who introduced me to tango as a birthday present and continues to encourage me and show his support even though he does not dance!"

Ed Giordano

What do tango and fly-fishing have in common?

"They are both about connection – connection to one's environment and the rhythms of life," says Ed of his two passions. It was the challenge to remain connected to life that seduced him onto the dance floor. Introduced to tango during a trip to Mendoza, Argentina about four years ago, he has for the past two years been regularly taking classes with Debbie and John in San Anselmo, and also attends classes in Emeryville. He was in the cast of All About Tango last year. Ed finds the ever-increasing stimulation of tango mentally, physically and spiritually enjoyable. Born and raised in the Bay Area, he spent much of his adult life overseas. He now lives in Petaluma. When he is not dancing tango or casting for trout, he can be found remodeling a kitchen or bath or tending his garden.

Lorna Hagg

Lorna grew up in England, then moved to Vermont and slowly made her way west to Minnesota, then Oregon and has lived in Novato for about five years. She moved here to be closer to her family after losing her husband nine years ago. Lorna has only danced socially but a friend introduced her to Argentine tango about a year ago and now she is totally hooked. "I love the music and sophisticated movement that tango offers," she says. "However, I'm still very much a beginner and have a lot to learn. Debbie and John have really taught me all I know so far."

Peter Katcoff

Peter's been seriously dancing Argentine tango for about four years, having first caught the bug in ballroom dancing classes. He's been to Buenos Aires twice, the first time as an enthusiastic but naïve beginner and the second—in 2010—an immersion experience in tango culture (check out his shoes!). He regularly attends classes and milongas in the Bay Area, his main teachers being Gustavo & Jesica, Debbie & John, and Jonathan & Olivia. He has ventured to milongas in Paris, Hong Kong and Ho Chi Minh City. Peter and his partner Thora Blaine were one of the featured couples in the 2011 production of All About Tango. He sums up his tango experience: "Total romance—dancing along the Seine with Thora was an experience of a lifetime!" A native of Boston, Peter lives in San Rafael. Semi-retired, he's an organization consultant and itinerant professor, having taught business at a graduate school in Vietnam.

Robert Leys

Robert grew up on Long Island, New York, studied architecture at the University of Michigan, and kept going west finally arriving in San Francisco. Robert is a practicing architect in Sonoma County. He has done many years of Scottish Country Dancing as well as 19th Century Ballroom. Robert had been dancing tango off and on for about six years before starting with Debbie and John on a regular basis in the fall of 2010. He has studied with Alisa and Alejandro Oyuela in Sonoma and attended many of Christy Cote's Boot Camps over the years. Robert was drawn to tango for its elegance and grace. "Tango brings an emotional contact with fellow dancers and an elegance and grace into my life," he says.

Deborah Loft

Deborah has been studying tango for five years, after several years of ballroom dancing. She was drawn to it because "tango is the Sistine Chapel ceiling of ballroom dance: it has beauty, complexity, mystique, and there is always more to discover." As a music-lover, she also enjoys tango's poignant music and distinctive instruments. Deborah danced a feature role in last year's All About Tango. She finds tango a great way to develop movement skills and to meet new friends.

Jorge Monterrosa

Jorge grew up in El Salvador listening to, and hating, tango music. His grandmother was a loyal admirer of Carlos Gardel and she used to listen while taking care of Jorge during his childhood years. "To me, the music was for old people," he says. Fifteen years ago he started dancing salsa and later ballroom dancing. One of his ballroom dance partners started taking Argentine tango classes and she kept asking him to also take the classes and partner with her. It took nearly five years to convince him and finally, in 2009, Jorge met Andrea Monti and Gato Valdez who really introduced him to the world of tango and made him appreciate it as a musical expression. Now, listening to the music and dancing tango helps Jorge release all the tension that his job as a software engineer brings.

Lyudmila Morry

A native of Russia, Lyudmila was born to dance, sing, play piano, act and be on stage. When she was seven years old, her parents chose a piano career for her, and she became a professional piano teacher. While she doesn't regret this decision, she always dreamed of becoming a ballerina, like her mother. "Dancing for me is like breathing," says Lyudmila, "If I don't dance, I don't live. Her first encounter with live tango was "Forever Tango" in 1995. "After watching the show, I only could regret that I couldn't do that. I didn't know tango lessons were available here," she says. Two years ago she saw a Gotan Project video clip, and told herself: I'm gonna do that! She went to Allegro Ballroom and numerous other places until she found Debbie and John and decided to share their passion for tango. "I'm so thrilled with their project-- it seems like my dream has come true," says Lyudmila.

Helen Reutovski

Helen recognized her passion for tango at the age of 10 when she saw two famous Russian figure skaters dancing tango on ice to La Cumparsita. As she watched it with her family, holding her breath, she was deeply touched by the beauty of the music and the movements. Helen has always loved to dance but she never knew that tango could be for her until she was introduced to John and Debbie. "I fell under the magic of their genuine love for people and dance. I've discovered a new piece of myself in tango, and I've learned if you keep dancing through any life circumstance, you will get through it," says Helen, who was a featured dancer in last year's All About Tango.

Michele Richards

Michele began taking tango lessons in 2009 to capture the heart of a girl and proceeded not only to catch the girl but the tango bug as well. Even though knee replacement surgery delayed her study for a few months, she has been taking lessons throughout the Bay Area at various venues including The Beat, Metronome Dance Collective, Queer Tango SF/East Bay and studies leader technique with Bay Area tango artist and instructor extraordinaire, Christy Cote. A retired firefighter, Michele owns and operates FIRST IN Emergency Response Training, LLC

where she teaches Disaster Preparedness for Bay Area Corporations. She resides in San Leandro with her daughter Ella and two greyhounds, Olive and Sally. Her ultimate dream is to attend a week-long tango intensive in Buenos Aires.

Dotty J. Rinefort

Dotty went from cowboy boots to waders when she moved from Texas to Oregon during her formative years. Now she's traded those for tango shoes. Tango entered her life after she attended her 50th high school reunion in 2008 when a classmate dared her to "just try it." She started taking classes with Debbie and John. Then, tango started to gain momentum and took on a life of its own after a trip to Buenos Aires two years ago. In this electronic age of texting and tweeting, tango has helped her maintain that human connection, that touch that we seem to be moving away from in our daily lives. Dotty and her husband Dart were one of the featured couples in the 2011 production of All About Tango. When she's not practicing tango, Dotty is busy building scale models for the family garden railroad and touring the back roads of California in "Rosie," a 1929 Model A.

Dart Rinefort

A Chicagoan longing since childhood to "go west young man," Dart arrived in San Francisco by way of St. Louis where he married Dotty, the love of his life. A mechanical engineering degree from Iowa State led to an engineering and sales position with a manufacturing company, and he later became a principal in a San Francisco consulting engineering firm. Since retiring, Dart keeps busy by touring in their Model A, building and maintaining their garden railroad and dancing the Argentine tango. With much encouragement from his dancing partner, their lessons in tango eventually led to a trip to Buenos Aires to attend a week-long session with local professionals, and to their performance in All About Tango. "The Argentine tango exemplifies our 48 year love affair," says Dart as he leads Dotty into a molinete.

Tanya Rokhlin

Born in Moscow, Russia, Tanya came to the US 20 years ago. This is her Tango Tale: While on a cruise from Lisbon to London, she watched a brilliant performance by Pampas Devils, then met the director of the group and his wife and had the guts to ask them to teach her the steps of Argentine tango. After only four lessons she did not know how to dance in real sense of the word, but she got the unforgettable sensation of moving along with the music, following your partner's signs, and being gracious, desirable and proud all at once. The experience gave Tanya the desire to take the necessary 'steps' to insure that she is not only a mesmerized spectator but also a modest participant in tango. "I am really lucky to meet Debbie and John, to take lessons from them, to share their passion, enjoy their knowledge, experience and good humor," Tanya says.

Dorota Rozycka

In her native Poland, Dorota worked in the wedding fashion industry as a designer and producer. She kept very busy with her job, raising children and doing household chores, but she always found time for physical activity, especially ballroom dancing. After watching "Tango" by Carlos Saura and "The Tango Lesson" with Sally Potter and Pablo Veron, she fell in love with Argentine tango and decided to do her best to learn the dance. When Dorota came to the United States she found many opportunities for learning tango. Debbie and John became her first teachers. "I really enjoy the class and their sharing with us their passion for tango," she says. One of the featured dancers in the 2011 production of All About Tango, Dorota also attends a milonga in Sausalito with Jessica and Gustavo, and in Emeryville with Nora and Ed.

Cocco Savelli

Cocco's early roots began in theater, most notably as Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz and ZoZo in The Merry Widow. A 25-year alum of the renowned gospel choir, The Lighthouse Singers, Cocco sang and recorded with such gospel greats as James Cleavland, and Tremaine Hawkins. She is best known for singing Pink Floyd's The Great Gig In The Sky as a dark Glinda in an original San Francisco production, "No Place Like Pink". Currently, Cocco is writing a dramatic cabaret/noir production for stage and is also a well known live sound engineer. "Tango is the heartbeat of my life and deeply fulfilling," says Cocco. "It has given me the gift of its life-blood, rescuing me with its passionate wings, and sustaining me with hope and strength through difficult times." Cocco performed in last year's production of All About Tango. She is deeply grateful to Debbie and John for their dedication and encouragement while promoting an exciting self discovery within each rhythm and beat.

Mindy Toth

Mindy grew up near Philadelphia and moved to San Francisco in 1981. She went to south India in 1990 and spent six years as a volunteer in an International community. That's where she met her husband and dance partner Ed Giordano. Introduced to tango four years ago while on a trip to Mendoza, Argentina, Mindy began studying with Donna Agoitia in Petaluma. Her study of tango has continued with Debbie and John in San Anselmo. Last year she attended Nora's tango weekend and danced in All About Tango. Mindy feels that tango is a metaphor for life -- giving and receiving, being attentive and surrendering. "At times tango is easy, a flow with another as though the two are one, and at times challenging ... it's all part of the dance of life," she muses.

Noelle Wang

Noelle was into ballroom dancing, but after having her wisdom teeth extracted she faced a long recovery and was unable to do strenuous exercise. That's when she decided to give Argentine tango a try, as it appeared to be a calmer form of dance. "On my journey of a lifelong lesson, I realize that I have to be patient to feel the lead, self balanced, efficient in the use of momentum, and mindful of taking, making, sharing space with my dance partner," says Nicole. In this dance she could not count on learning by sight and muscling her moves. Since she has to unlearn bad habits and relearn good habits, she believes that Argentine tango is making her a better follower. "It is part of my retirement plan to keep my mind and body active," she says.

Valerie Wilgus

Valerie became committed to dance when she received a scholarship to study with the San Francisco Ballet school and experienced the magic of performance when she danced student roles in the "Nutcracker" and "Beauty and the Beast" on the Opera House stage. She took further training at the National Academy of Dance in Champaign, Illinois. From there she joined the faculty of Marin Ballet where she taught for 13 years and continued to perform with a variety of Bay Area groups. In 1997, Valerie was thrilled to discover Argentine tango classes being taught in the Bay Area. The following year she dropped out of the tango scene to focus on school and become a dental hygienist. Since returning to tango in 2002, she has taken classes with local teachers and guest teachers from Argentina. Participating in Debbie and John's classes and rehearsals has been a special joy.