

# *A Brief History Of Tango, Salsa And Gauchos.*

## *TANGO*

There is no certainty about the origin and meaning of the word Tango, since it has many interpretations.

The dance and its music were born and evolved together in the final decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the slums in the outskirts of Buenos Aires ,Argentina and in the neighboring Montevideo, Uruguay (just across the Rio de la Plata).

During its earliest years, from 1880 to 1900, few tangos were recorded or committed to paper. But during this final quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was born a new generation of musicians who would soon take beyond its simple beginnings. These are composers of the Guardia Vieja, the old guard. From about 1900 to 1920 they develop the tango into one of this century's most romantic and beautiful music forms.

During the early years tangos might be played by a solo pianist in a café, or by a duo or trio with flute, violin and guitars. Around 1920 the vocal tango became much more prominent, initially propelled by the popularity of folksinger Carlos Gardel. An entire genre of vocal tango music evolved with lyrics that might be compared to our country-western music. During the 1920s as the tango become more widely accepted, bands expanded to meet this rising popularity.

Through all its history up to the present Argentine tango was built by many artists: writers, musicians, dancers and singers. Each one of them had a personal touch, but they all had two things in common: The love for Buenos Aires music and the need of being Tango ambassadors.

Beyond doubt, the Tango is the essence of the modern soul of dancing, For it is not only a dance, it is a style; to master the Tango one must first master its style, absorb its atmosphere. More than anything else, the Tango is about a connection, an empathy between two people, the need to embrace, and be in the arms of another, to escape, albeit for just a brief moment in time, and in that moment, to live a life time...

## *SALSA*

Salsa is not easily defined. Though many get caught up in the old debate as to who "invented" salsa (Cubans or Puerto Ricans), the truth of the matter is that salsa has and will always continue to have a grate number of influences that have each played a large part in its evolution.

Salsa is a distillation of many Latin and Afro-Caribbean dances. Each played a large part in its evolution. In salsa turns have become an important feature; Salsa has rhythm, passion, soul and many other feeling that you will understand and learn the more you get to know about it. This syncretism also occurred in smaller degrees and with variations in other countries like the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Puerto Rico and Cuba among others.

New York created the term "Salsa", but it did not create the dance. The term became popular as nickname to refer to a variety of different music, from several countries of Hispanic influence: Rumba, Son Montuno, Guaracha, Mambo, Cha cha cha, Danzon, Son, Guaguanco, Guajira, Charanga, Cumbia, Bomba, Festejo, Merengue, among others. Many of these has maintained their individuality and many were mixed creating "salsa".

Salsa music is a fusion of traditional African and Cuban and other Latin-American rhythms that traveled from the islands (Cuba and Puerto Rico) to New York during the migration, somewhere between the 1940s and the 1970s, depending on where one puts boundary between "real" salsa and its predecessors.

## *GAUCHOS*

They've been called the wanderers of the Pampas (from the Indian word "flatland"). Gauchos have been known to wander the countryside of Argentina as early as the 1600's, time in which the Pampas were overpopulated by 'Cimarron' cattle, brought to South America by Pedro de Mendoza in 1538. At this time and through many centuries, cow leather was one of the most traded goods between the old world and the colonies. The main importance of cattle was not the meat but the leather obtained from it. The word 'gaucho' came into existence for the first time in 1790 to describe a very rough individual, that would travel alone, or sometimes with a woman, having as his only baggage, a knife called 'facon'. Gauchos belonged to the country side. They would be the ones who were familiar with all intricacies of the land and their animals, as well as the life of the natives they would fight. Gauchos would gather together for hunting purposes, they were in a good position to put to work all they had learned by themselves in those lonely moments living in close contact with animals. Soon commercial ranches developed that needed managers to control cattle production. No one can do a better job than the gauchos.

***Gaucha show:*** The modern gaucho dances are a combination of traditional folk dances and a modern interpretation incorporating elements used in his daily life.

***Bombo:*** A percussion instrument, comparable to a drum. The body of the drum is made out of a hollow tree, with the mounted skins retaining the animal's fur (crude leather), thus producing a very distinctive mellow and deep tone.

The BOMBO is played with sticks, which strike the wooden rims and the head. The Indians used to play the BOMBO to communicate with others from long distances. Today it is also used as a background sound effect in dance acts with complex movements and variations.

***Boleadoras :***Two ropes with a hard plastic ball at the end of each rope (originally made of stone). The "boleadoras" follows the beat of the music or the rhythm of the "bombo drum", and the "zapateo" (gaucho's tap dance). The Gaucho's hand clapping leads the compass of the tempo, the variations, and the accentuation of the beats on the floor. A hundred years ago these "boleadoras" were used by the Gauchos and the Indians to hunt animals.

***Malambo: (gaucho's tap):*** This dance is similar to the *Flamenco Spanish* tap dance – it is a masculine and energetic dance consisting of "zapateo" (tapping with the feet). Traditionally it simulates a dispute among the gauchos, the main gaucho character challenges the other gauchos to see who makes better moves and more thunderous taps. The Malambo dance form was born in the early 17th century in the Pampas of Argentina, and originated as a tournament of gaucho (cowboy) skills, danced solely by men. Rhythmic, unruly and characterized by virtuoso foot work, malambo dancing incorporates an amazing series of heel tapping (resembling American tap dance), and cepillada (grazing the floor with the sole of the foot).

***Poncho dance:*** Poncho is a red piece of fabric made of cotton (wool). The gauchos wear ponchos in the winter time to protect themselves from the cold weather. The Gaucho uses the poncho in his choreography, twirling with the "poncho" opened, in the air, until it looks like a solid flat piece.