

## AROUND TOWN

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## Tango,

Well-known tango dancers and teachers from Argentina and Europe will be giving classes and performing at the Taipei Tango Festival's Grand Milonga

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STAFF REPORTER



**T**he victory of a Japanese couple in the elite salon competition of the Seventh World Championship of Tango in Buenos Aires last month showed just how popular tango has become around the world.

While Kyoko and Hiroshi Yamao's win may have shocked Argentines, it should not have come as much of a surprise to those who have followed the growth of the dance in Asia. Here in Taiwan, there has been a rising interest in tango among dancers and musicians to the point where Taipei can boast not one, but at least three tango orchestras, and an annual Taipei Tango Festival that has become one of the most important events for fans in Asia.

This year's festival is the seventh, and one of the organizers, Stacy Jou (周思齊), said it will be the biggest yet, with more classes and more teachers.

Jou is one of the key players in Taiwan's tango scene, along with her partner Daniel Liu (劉心岳). They founded the Taipei Tango Association in 2000, began organizing the annual festival in 2003 and last year opened the Tanguisimo Tango Space (探戈藝文沙龍) in downtown Taipei, which will be one of the venues for the tango workshops, along with the Danswell Dance Center.

This year's festival offers six nights of dances and five days of workshops with a total of 32 classes that range from beginner's level right up to "professional." There will be a maximum of 40 to 50 students per workshop, depending on the class, Jou said in a telephone interview on Wednesday.

Some workshops, however, are already full, while some of the others need either more men or more women. A beginner's lesson costs just NT\$300, while the more advanced classes, which are sold in blocks, cost NT\$950. The full list of workshops and prices can be found, in English and Chinese, on the festival's Web site: [www.tangotaiwan.com/2009-festival/home.html](http://www.tangotaiwan.com/2009-festival/home.html).

The four pairs of teachers come from Argentina and Europe — Damian Esell and Nancy Louzan, Esteban Moreno and Claudia Codega, Javier Rodriguez and Andrea Misse and Leandro Palou and Romina Godoy — and they all have extensive experience as teachers and performers at festivals and stage shows, as well as in film and on TV.

This year is the first time that four "master" couples have been invited; previously there have been three. All but one are already known to local tango fans.

"For Romina, this is her first time to come to Taipei. The other couples, like Javier and Andrea, have come for the past three or four years," Jou said.

"Because we have been in the tango scene for more than 10 years, we know many teachers. Every year we invite the 'first class' masters. They travel a lot, they are very popular and are well known in Europe, Asia," Jou said. "All four couples have different styles. Every year when we do the invitations, we think of their styles and their way of teaching. They are all very enthusiastic teachers. Some are traditional, some are more creative, some are younger."

There will also be 17 featured dancers at the milongas, or tango parties, seven of whom, including Jou and Daniel, come from Taipei: Agnes Tang (湯馨瑋), Derrick Lee (李則峰), Gustavo Lin (林欣民), Chen Wei-ning (陳維寧) and Susan Su (蘇紀璇). The others come from Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul, and all have extensive teaching and competition experience.

It is not just the masters and featured dancers who are coming from all over, however, it's the fans as well.

"The scale is bigger this year. We have received more registrations from abroad — more than 150 from Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, [South] Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia as well as from the USA, Turkey and Germany," Jou said.

"We're happy that people know about the festival. People know we're getting bigger and bigger. They've heard about us," she said.

The milongas will be held at three locations in and around Taipei — three at the Tanguisimo Tango Space and two at the Red House Theater (紅樓劇場) in Ximending — while the Grand Milonga will be held at the Domal House (圓頂劇場) in Sindian and will feature the iTango Orchestra. The five-year old orchestra plays "traditional" tango music and features two violinists, two bandoneon (accordion) players, a pianist, bass player and two singers.

Tanguisimo will host Wednesday night's warm-up event, the opening milonga on Thursday night and Monday night's "relaxing" milonga.

"We'll have about 300 to 350 people maybe for the biggest event on Saturday. For the other milongas, 100 to 200," Jou said.

"Saturday night is the Grand Milonga; the masters will have their formal show that night. But Friday is one of the most special nights; the dress code is Chinese style," she said. "On the 20th, the masters will be improvising their dances."

Taipei is not Buenos Aires. But for several nights next week it will be as close to heaven a tango fan can get on this side of the world.

## FESTIVAL NOTES:

**WHAT:** Seventh Taipei Tango Festival

**WHEN:** Wednesday to Sept. 21. The nightly milongas begin at 8pm and go until 12:30am

**WHERE:** Wednesday, Sept. 17 and Sept. 21 at Tanguisimo Tango Space (探戈藝文沙龍), 7F-4, 169, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段169號7F-4), Tel: (02) 2779-1136. Sept. 18 and Sept. 20 at Red House Theater (紅樓劇場), 10 Chengdu Rd, Taipei City (台北市成都路10號). Sept. 19 at Domal House (圓頂劇場), 3, Zhongxing Rd Sec 3, Sindian, Taipei County (台北縣新店市中興路三段3號)

**ADMISSION:** NT\$350 for Wednesday, Sept. 17 and Sept. 21, Sept. 18 is NT\$750 and the Grand Milonga on Sept. 19 is NT\$1,700



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TAIPEI TANGO ASSOCIATION

