

How I Learned the Tango

Since I was very young my inexhaustible energy and tapping feet have suggested I was destined to be a dancer. Last year I encountered something magnificent that opened a new door for my creative expression.

I met my tango partner by accident. It was at a concert featuring pieces from my favorite choreographer. The dance was impeccable but it was an unanticipated addition to the program that put me on the edge of my seat. Onto the stage walked four musicians. One was a young man in black patent leather shoes with white detailing that shone as brightly as the finish on his accordion. They started to play and the eccentric music filled the room. The avant-garde pieces were abstract yet fascinating and somehow familiar. It brought back memories of the klezmer band that played at my bat mitzvah. I was completely captivated.

I downloaded an eBay app during intermission and began hunting for a used accordion. I was desperate to learn all about the instrument and how to play it. By dinner I had convinced my father to buy me one. I acquired the e-mail address of the accordion player. He lived in the neighborhood and had a few students. By the end of the night I had an accordion in the mail and a lesson set up for the following weekend.

My teacher, Moshe, was a Russian immigrant living in a small apartment. His English was limited but he was a good teacher and the story of how he came to live in America was inspiring. He told stories of his homeland Russia, a cramped apartment that he shared with his entire family in Israel and the sacrifices he made to begin a new life in America. I enjoyed every lesson (and still do!) and learned that there was another art form in addition to dance that I was very passionate about.

Playing the accordion can be frustrating. There is no way to see the buttons and the air pushed out of the bellows smells strongly of thrift stores. But the sound and beauty of the instrument trumps the shortcomings. I'm not a virtuoso but I can play. My accordion weighs thirty pounds and lugging it around can be a hassle but there is nothing better than seeing the reaction on people's faces when a young dancer pulls out an accordion and begins to play the tango.

I have been dancing since I was three. I've learned ballet, modern, and even acrobatics. The tango has never been on my bucket list...until I heard it played on the accordion. The famous tango La Compasita was meant to be voiced on this instrument. When I play it, it's as if I'm dancing. The soothing rhythm of the accordion allows me to shed some of the troubles and stress of high school and stretch my creative muscles. It takes two to tango and I think I've found a partner I can dance with for a lifetime.