

Conclusions

The female tango dancer's costume

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For slightly more than a century, tango has developed from Argentina across Latin America and Europe, conquering the rest of the world. Indeed, it was a fashionable phenomenon in Paris, but also in Spain, Britain, Italy, Germany (Salas 1989, 126), and in Japan (Ferrer and Del Priore 1999, preface). Since then, its popularity has not faded. In fact, modern tango music styles are blooming - mostly coming from Argentina -, tango magazines are still widespread, dancing festivals and workshops are organised quite often, and there are plenty of websites about tango - as a music, dance or song style.

Tango, however, has not always been so trendy, because of the vulgarity it was thought to imply. Its notoriety, nevertheless, played a key role in its circulation among different countries. Paradoxically, people who condemned tango actually spread it. Although the original sense that emanated from the traditional tango has been changed throughout the years, as argued in this essay, tango as a dance has remained the symbol of sensuality.

It may seem peculiar to study the costume of a dance to better comprehend its signification, as has been the approach undertaken in this essay. However, although it is shown that there is no typical tango costume, tango dressing has reflected, somehow, the evolution of this dance throughout the years and places.

In particular, this essay has emphasised that the female tango costume has reflected the social condition of women throughout the years. Women's fashion has closely followed tango evolution. With the broader acceptance of tango among different social classes, nowadays, female tango style shows more reserve than in the previous centuries, when it was mostly associated with women dancing in brothels. Thus, the female tango costume is an appreciable confirmation of the impact of society on tango as a dance.

However, as stated in the main text, a subtle issue appears when considering tango shoes. In fact, they are the only frequent items of the female tango costume that appear to preserve their original shape across time. As a possible explanation, this preference seems to be commanded by convenience and comfort for practicing the dance, rather than social context. Since the original tango shoes had a shape adequately adapted to dancing, changing them was not necessary.

Considering this argument as well as the fact that women may be interested in authenticity helps explain why the original tango shoes, as made in the Argentinean factories, have survived in their traditional shape. Moreover, tango shoes perhaps represent the only trace remaining from the so-called traditional Argentinean tango.

[>> [Table of contents](#)]