

Learning the tango, step by step

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Gliding across the floor at the Eiffel Society on a Tuesday night, dancers learn the fundamentals of tango.
(Photo by Ryan Rivet)

It may take two to tango, but it takes self-confidence to step onto the dance floor.

“Start with the embrace,” local tango instructor [Ector Gutierrez](#) guided, as old friends and newcomers circled the dance floor at [Eiffel Society](#) on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans. Students return to Gutierrez's unconventional classroom weekly, entering with no experience and leaving with the grace and poise to glide across the floor after dedicated practice.

For those hoping to pick up the passionate dance, Eiffel Society hosts Gutierrez's free, hour-long tango lesson every Tuesday at 7 p.m. Students can show off their new sultry steps as dancing continues until 10 p.m.

Originally from Corinto, Nicaragua, Gutierrez has led the class for about three years and is currently instructing with dancer Chris Morris.

Though based in New Orleans, Gutierrez has traveled the globe to share his dancing expertise. In October 2006, he directed tango workshops in Beijing and Hong Kong. Gutierrez also makes regular visits to Buenos Aires, the birthplace of the sensual dance, to immerse himself in the resonant Argentine culture.

The dance veteran's own introduction to tango began as a personal challenge. Overcoming tango's difficulty became an intriguing objective for him.

“I had been an instructor of salsa for a few years, and I ran across it by chance,” he said. “I noticed some people doing this strange dance I had not done before. It was not long before I became hooked, and I never looked back.”

Though tango is improvisational in nature, Gutierrez emphasizes that dancers must first master the fundamentals to truly develop their skills.

“The essentials are posture and embrace. You have to have it just right for everything to work. It takes time and dedication to learn these very simple concepts,” said Gutierrez.

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