

Tango aficionados to dance 'live documentary'

Katie Watts

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Tango. It's the absinthe of the dance world: sweet, complex, compelling, alluring, stimulating, addictive. Fortunately, the dance form has only beneficial side effects, challenging and stimulating the mind and body.

Debbie Goodwin, a San Anselmo dancer and the creative force behind the groups Alma Del Tango and Tango Con*Fusion, wants to share her passion for this intriguing, sultry South American dance. At 2 p.m. Feb. 10, she and her husband and dance partner, John Campbell, will be joined by five other tango couples and narrator Terence Clarke for "Tango: A Romantic Ritual" at Drake High School.

Goodwin has been a dancer most of her life, studying jazz and tap at first, then moving into social dances. She discovered tango, as many have, from touring stage shows such as Tango Argentino, Forever Tango and Tango Pasion.

She was getting her degree in dance at the time and found "the more I got into tango, more and more of my time and energy was going away from other dances." She also became focused on the dance's background, history and culture.

Tango became the subject of her master's thesis. And it changed her life forever: She met Campbell at a tango conference at Stanford.

Not surprisingly, "that's been our big

hobby together," Goodwin says. She's studied the Argentine tango culture for the past 12 years, including nine trips to Argentina, teaching tango with Campbell and forming the all-woman dance company Tango Con*Fusion.

What is it about tango that's so habit-forming? Goodwin pauses, thinks and says, "It's always hard to put into words; that's why we dance it. ... We call it the silent language of tango.

"From a dancer's point of view, tango can be as simple or as complex as you want it. Choreographically, that's intriguing."

Sunday's performance is what Goodwin calls a live documentary. "It's not a lecture demonstration," she says. "The first half of the performance is a glimpse of what real social Argentine tango is like, rather than what you might see in a glitzy stage show. People will be able to relate to the dance and think 'That's something I can do, something I want to do.'"

The second half features the six members of Tango Con*Fusion with their male partners. "We all teach professionally, and it's interesting to see the different character and style of each couple," Goodwin says. "Sometimes it's choreography, sometimes it's improvised, so the second half is a little more like a show."

Tango, Goodwin says, "is the connection you strive for with another person. Sometimes that can be a complete stranger. It's the connection you try to reach during three minutes of song and it takes you to a place where you need to be very open. It's not a place most people go to during an average day. Sometimes, it's almost like meditation."

IF YOU TANGO



Debbie Goodwin and husband John Campbell of San Anselmo are hosting and performing in Tango: A Romantic Ritual on Feb. 10 at Drake High. (Provided by Debbie Goodwin)

What: "Tango: A Romantic Ritual"

When: 2 p.m. Feb. 10

Where: Sir Francis Drake High School Little Theater, 1327 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., San Anselmo

Tickets: \$20 advance, \$25 at the door

Information: www.AlmaDelTango.com, www.marinlearn.com

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