

fire!

Ighteen months from conception to inception, the music, dance, and film Festival is the inspiration of Santa Barbara Symphony conductor and music director *Giséle Ben-Dor*. The festival marks the first time Ben-Dor has drawn from the cultures of Uruguay—where she was born—and neighboring Argentina. The spread of tango from this region has proved widely compelling, and has taken hold of the feet and imagination of the entire world. From the ice of Finland to the cool restraint of Japan, the passion of tango has burst into flame. And here in Santa Barbara, tango burns steadily—Tango Santa Barbara is a fixture of the local scene.

In the 125-odd years that tango has been a recognized form of dance and music, it's had considerable influence upon art forms beyond the borders of South America. The lyricism and passion of tango has certainly made an impression on film; several tango films are peppered throughout the week (see Alison Fraunhar's story on pg. 31).

The music of tango has expanded well beyond the nightclub, ballroom, and milonga, to influence classical music worldwide (see Josef Woodard's interview with Ben-Dor, pg. 26, and his feature on composer **Astor Piazzolla**, pg. 30). Little-known tango

concerts this week include the Symphony's free "Concert for Young People," Tuesday morning at the Arlington, and a free concert in Paseo Nuevo on Thursday, from 5-7 p.m. Later that evening there will be tango music at Bogart's café, and there will be a tango band playing at

Border's Bookstore on Sunday afternoon.

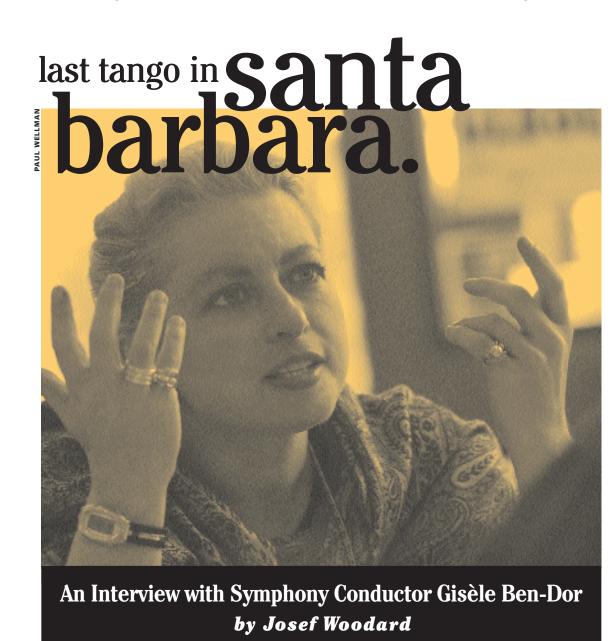
The signature instrument of tango is the *bandoneón*, which will be performed throughout the festival by Argentinean virtuoso *Juanjo Mosalini*. Besides accompanying the symphony for the weekend finales at the Arlington, Mosalini will also perform at the festival's discussion and lecture events (see schedule pg. 31) and at "*The Story of Tango*," where film clips, dance displays, and the history and music of tango will be presented Thursday

and the history and music of tango will be presented Thursday night at UCSB's Lotte Lehmann Hall. If it's dance you want (see Felicia Tomasko's tango and malambo

articles on pages 28 and 29), there are concerts of ballet and modern dance interpretation as well as traditional tango. The State Street Ballet will present two pieces by choreographer *William Soleau*, under the description *Neuvo Tango*. The last piece of the evening will be most exciting: the world premiere of composer *Alberto Ginastera's* complete *Estancia*, with original choreography by feted choreographer *Jimmy Gamonet de los Heros*, ballet master of the Miami City Ballet. The *Estancia* has not been performed in its entirety outside of Buenos Aires since 1953.

If you want to dance-and how could you not?—don't miss the free Paseo Nuevo tango classes on both Saturday afternoons, or join in at the SOhO dance concert on Friday, February 13. And of course, the Milonga at Café Buenos Aires on Wednesday evening beckons. This is sure to attract the tango faithful in a live, casual dance, where the footwork will be outstanding, and the social atmosphere thick with exotic guests dressed for the part.

For those of us enamored with the sultry melodies and rhythms of Latin America, this festival is a chance to experience dance and music by internationally acclaimed artists—and to *dance*—as the fiery world of tango and malambo sets Santa Barbara aflame for ten days this month.



he Tango and Malambo Festival kicking off this weekend brings together many tentacles in Santa Barbara's arts community, in a sweeping tribute involving music, dance, film, discussions, and other cultural offshoots. But, in a very real way, the fount from which it all springs is Santa Barbara Symphony conductor Gisèle Ben-Dor, whose effort and vision has made it a reality. Last fall's announcement of her departure from the post makes the festival a kind of final grand gesture—a last tango, if you will—in her 10 momentous years here.

Anyone who has followed the Ben-Dor chapter in the symphony's history also knows that the festival is a logical extension of an ongoing ambition she has to research, perform, expose, and document the important music of Latin America. Five years ago, she presented the compelling Revueltas Festival in town. Since then, Revueltas' music has gradually filtered into greater recognition in classical circles.

Ben-Dor has also recorded previously unavailable music, including Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Amerindia* symphony and Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera's complete ballet, *Estancia*. The State Street Ballet will perform to that recording at the Lobero in the festival's opening weekend (Sat., Feb. 7, 8 p.m.; Sun., Feb. 8, 2 p.m.), giving that ballet its U.S. premiere.

More premiere action occurs the following weekend, when the symphony concert—dubbed *The Soul of Tango*—on February 14 and 15 presents the festival's centerpiece. The program features the U.S. premiere of a rare, early Astor Piazzolla orchestral work, *Buenos Aires: Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos*, and the world premiere of *Triple Concerto for Piano*, Soprano, and Bandoneon, by living Argentine composer Luis Enrique Bacalov (who won an Oscar for his lustrous score for Il Postino). Additional music by Piazzolla and Ginastera round out a symphony program in which no warhorses are allowed. It's a not-to-miss occasion.

Navigating the whirlwind of pre-festival preparations one afternoon last week, Ben-Dor spoke about her latest ambitious project on the phone from her happily snowed-in house in New Jersey.

Do you see this festival as the next chapter in your mission of expanding awareness of Latin American musical tradition, which began with the Revueltas Festival?

I hope so. The Revueltas Festival was a labor of love. This one is an even bigger undertaking. It has a side that everybody can participate in. That festival was a more sophisticated thing. But when you say tango, everybody thinks they know what it is. When you say Revueltas, they usually say "spell it" [laughs]. Tango is universal. It's gratifying that people like it.

You make a subtle allusion there, mentioning that people think they know what it is. Are you trying to expand that limited awareness?

Yes, because they know what they see in movies. They know just the very tip, the most basic level. And that is the level that has been exported. People also think of tango as dance almost uniquely. As music, it is a genre that has had many evolutions and turning points. The music itself is so interesting, melodically, rhythmically, and with the actual tone this combination of instruments produces. And the *bandoneón* (the tango accordion) is such a distinctive instrument.

Is the link between tango and symphonic cultures still in a pretty formative stage?

In the program book, I wrote a short essay called "Thoughts on Piazzolla," and that's exactly the question that I raise there, particularly in the case of Piazzolla. He was the prodigious one, the genius. If he would have written more symphonic music with tango, if he had not been completely discouraged from it, what might we have now?

He did write (classical music) here and there, but he was told at a very young age, by Nadia Boulanger (the famed French composition teacher), that he really was a tango composer and that he should play the bandoneón. She said he had no talent for symphonic writing, that his music had no feeling. These are the paradoxes of life, because he went back to Argentina. He said, "Okay, I'm a tango musician," and he created this "Nuevo Tango," because the serious composer was still in him. He was very much criticized in Argentina. He was excoriated, because Argentines wanted their tango straight. But he started creating a very fetching language.

Have you followed Piazzolla throughout your life? When did you first become aware of his music?

I grew up in Uruguay. When I was a child, everybody knew about Piazzolla. I never met him. But to talk about a Piazzolla tango, you knew exactly what it was. It was

like asking for a Sousa march. This is home.

As a child, I grew up with the Beatles in my heart. I was 12 years old when we heard them in Uruguay. Tango was for the older people—it's very deep, not for the 12-year-olds. But of course, everybody knew Piazzolla. And you heard these tangos all the time. I knew all these tangos by heart—words, too.

Is it fair to make an analogy between tango and other musical styles in the world that bridge music of the "street" or with a folk connection—and the serious music world?

Crossover? Absolutely. But don't forget that Slavonic dances and waltzes were pop music (in the 19th century). After many years, we began to put all this music in a sanctuary, which is okay. It's miraculous music. But it wasn't classical when it started. The waltz was considered indecent in Vienna. These were not good girls who danced the waltz. That changed, of course. But it started as something low-class and pop.

I think, if one is really honest, you can say that there has always been crossover. The great composers have taken their material from music of the people.

Do you think tango has begun to arrive in the classical world, or is that still just a dream?

No, not yet. It depends on composers now. That's the second thing we're bringing to the symphony concert, a new piece by Luis Bacalov (see above). He's alive and is playing his own part (on piano). We'll record that piece, as well. It's a modern piece, but the language is very friendly, sort of Prokofiev-like. It incorporates the bandoneón and the idioms of the tango within a general Western symphonic language. Bacalov is Argentine. He wrote the film score for Il Postino, which he won the Oscar for. We're also showing that film—it's absolutely gorgeous. I don't think tango has arrived, but one can encourage good things whenever they appear.

You're putting Santa Barbara on the tango map here.

Why not? Whatever I'm doing, it's what I'm interested in. Besides all the other classical music that I do, it's my orchestra. It's where I work. So it's a natural thing. [Laughs] And I'm stubborn. *continued*

The State Street Ballet performs Tango and Malambo, Sat., Feb. 7, 8 p.m., and Sun., Feb. 8, 2 p.m., at the Lobero Theatre. \$20-\$42.50. Call 963-0761. The S.B. Symphony performs The Soul of Tango, Sat., Feb. 14, 8 p.m., and Sun., Feb. 15, 3 p.m. Arlington Theatre. \$23-\$48. Call 963-4408.

tango forever.

Argentina's Native Dance Began in the Street and Bordello by Felicia Tomasko

ango is a very exciting art. It's not an art meant for museums, but for night bars, for spending time with one's sweetheart . . . for having a drink and a light in between," describes Horatio Ferrer, the President of the National Academy of Tango, in the film, *Tango: the Obsession*.

The tango is a partner-dance of passion, lust, longing, conflict, loneliness, nostalgia, tragedy, despair, and seduction. It is sultry, sexy; every move has meaning. The tango is a conversation, a dialogue composed of glances, the touching of hands, and the winding of one dancer's leg around the other's—a dialogue spoken without words. Unlike other partner-dances such as the waltz or the foxtrot, there is a communication in the tango, a story.



Born somewhere in the late 1800s, in Buenos Aires, tango spread throughout Argentina and Uruguay. Tango is the creation of an immigrant culture, with many influences, including: the Spanish flamenco (one of the most popular types of music in Buenos Aires at the time), African drumming and rhythms, Italian music, and the sound of the German bandoneón —similar to the Italian accordion, but more challenging to play. The origins of the word tango are a mystery—some dance theorists trace it to Tango Andaluz, a Spanish musical style; others claim it comes from a Nigerian drum god combined with the Spanish word

for drum (tambor) to yield tango. Tango by any other name still reveals a multifaceted set of influences. In this sense, its cultural input from Europe and Africa mirror the development of jazz in the U.S., and tango is often described as the South American jazz.

In the late 19th century, most of the immigrants in Buenos Aires were men, so it was primarily men who danced the tango, partnering each other, on street corners, perfecting, anticipating the opportunity to show off their skills with a woman. The music and lyrics were often of struggle, of longing, of the passions and hopes of an immigrant in a country far from home. For people of the working class, the tango was an expression of hope.

Tango spread from the streets to the bordellos and brothels of Buenos Aires. As men waited and music played, they would seize the opportunity to practice, engaging the women in dance. Other, more respectable establishments began to encourage the tango as a form of entertainment, and the tango soon spread to the upper and middle classes in Argentina. (But publicly the upper classes found the dance bawdy and indecent—good girls didn't dance the tango.)

Though considered too licentious to dance in public, tango was also too sexy and exciting to remain in the port of Buenos Aires for long. Argentinean sailors exported the tango, dancing with local girls on their travels. It was in Paris where the tango first took hold abroad, likely entering through the port of Marseille. First appearing there in 1909, the dance was all the rage in Paris by 1912, embraced by the intellectuals and the upper class. By 1913, tango had spread worldwide—that year the Selfridges department store in London sponsored a tango ball that was the event of the season. The dance influenced fashion as women abandoned corsets and hoops in favor of tulip skirts that opened in front, allowing for the winding of legs and for the female dancer to get close to her partner.

Anything Parisian was hip, and the growing upper class in the

newly wealthy Argentina was beginning to travel. Exposed to the tango in the fashionable Paris nightclubs, they re-imported the dance back to Buenos Aires. When tango came home, it took root throughout society, blossoming in the golden age of tango, the 1930s and '40s, when the whole country was dancing in ballrooms, at the milonga or social club, at parties, at home, and in the streets. The milonga became an important social institution, a place where people went to dream, to escape everyday life, and to seduce. President Juan Peron and wife Evita embraced the dance—as they did all popular movementslikewise, many famous tango artists were involved in the Peronista movement.

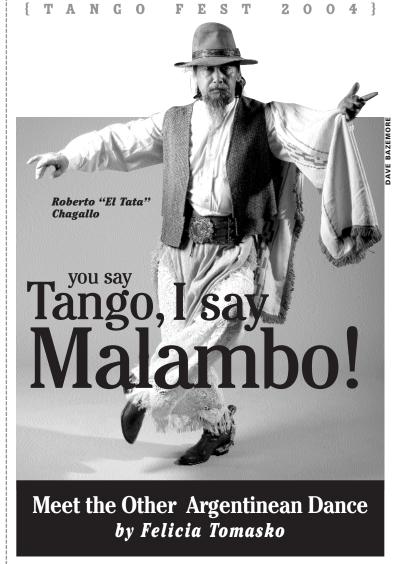
The tango was not only a dance of working people, of social movements, and seduction, but also a showcase for artists. In the roaring '20s—when the tango phenomenon was fully entrenched worldwide, the Argentinean tango-music singer Carlos Gardel was the man to swoon for. A star not only in Latin America, Gardel was an early tango version of Elvis, surrounded by fans, playing New York and Paris, and starring in films. Probably tango's first superstar, Gardel died young in 1935, but still is said to sing better every day, and his devoted followers continue to place a lit cigarette in the fingers of the statue at his tomb.

The 1955 military coup in Argentina led to the suppression of the populist art form, ushering in the tango's dark ages in Buenos Aires.. Young men wanting to flirt and seduce abandoned the ritual courtship of the tango. Tango continued to be danced underground, by the older generation, and taken overseas.

The fall of the *junta* in 1983 initiated a tango resurgence in Argentina. In the past twenty years, tango has continued to spread, influencing music and dance around the world. It has even become the national music and dance of the unlikely country of Finland.

Inevitably, the highly stylized, always dramatic tango has invaded the world of Broadway. Luis Bravo's show, *Forever Tango*, premiered in San Francisco, then went on the road not only in the U.S. but also to London, Toronto, Montreal, and Italy, before settling in as the longest-running tango production to play on the great white way in New York.

JOIN THE EVER-GROWING INTERNA-TIONAL TANGO MOVEMENT on Thursday, February 12, 8 p.m. at UCSB's Lotte Lehmann Hall for an evening exploring the history and distinct style of the tango art form. The Story of Tango will present music, dance, and film clips narrated by composers Pablo Aslan and Luis Bacalov. Sandor and Parissa, tango dancers extraordinaire will perform, along with Argentinean bandoneón virtuoso Juan Jose Mosalini.



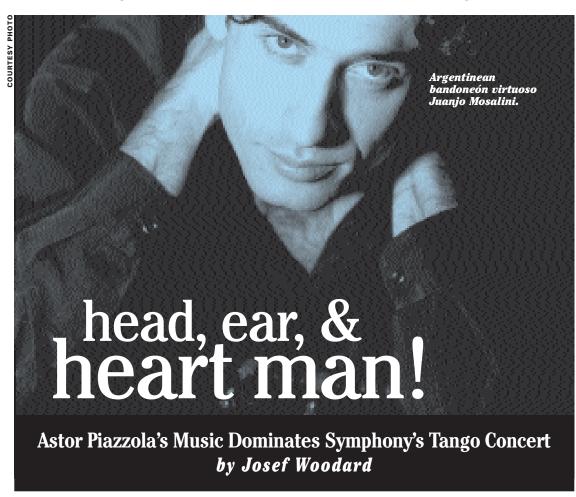
he malambo is not the mambo." This mantra is often repeated by members of the Tango Festival, many of whom were at first not familiar with the malambo. The names may sound similar, but the mambo is a Cuban rhythm, while the malambo was born of the 17th-century gaucho culture of the Argentinean pampas.

The malambo is a solo dance of the macho cowboys. The dusty gaucho of the South American plains is not someone you'd expect to see dancing. But the malambo is not about tuxedos and twirling with one's partner, it is a dance of rivalry, of struggle. Performed only by men, the gauchos challenge each other through the dance, noisily attempting to outdo the competition with the finesse of their moves and the thunder of their footwork. The performance of the malambo is a tournament, a display of the gauchos' skills.

While performing, the gaucho looks as though he has just dismounted from his horse. He wears his working clothes to dance: knee-high cowboy boots and wide flared pants. His distinctive movements are characterized by the zapateo, or tapping of the feet; and his steps include heel tapping, the cepillada (brushing or grazing the floor with the sole of the foot), and the repique (hitting with the heels and spur). The rhythmic contest is marked by an energetic virtuosity, traditionally accompanied by only a drum. Some insist the malambo is a

precursor to American tap, while others draw similarities to flamenco, postulating that the steps derived from the Spanish dance. It certainly was exposed to cultural influences from throughout Europe and Africa as immigrants worked, socialized, and drove cattle across the fertile plains of the Argentinean and Uruguayan pampas. While the tango is the dance born of the urban culture of Argentina, the malambo is the traditional rural counterpart. While tango is jazz, malambo is country. Its rural roots do not diminish its popularity—it is regularly performed as a part of traditional festivals in Argentina. According to Lynn Holley, managing director of our own festival, the inclusion of the malambo speaks to the genius of Gisèle Ben-Dor in bringing together both of the traditional dance forms of Argentina. Thousands of people sponsor tango festivals, but rarely is there a festival that includes both dances.

For those people who have not had the opportunity to see the malambo, and even for those who have, Argentinean Roberto "El Tata" Chagallo will steal the show. He is performing as part of the State Street Ballet's program of Tango and Malambo on Saturday, February 7, at 8 p.m., and Sunday, February 8, at 2 p.m., at the Lobero Theatre. Dance aficionados should not miss this opportunity to see the infrequently staged, virtuosic malambo, performed by a modern master.



For me, the tango was always more about the ear than the feet.

— Astor Piazzolla

ention "Nuevo Tango"
—or even tango in
general—and the name
Astor Piazzolla is bound to loom
large. The illustrious reputation of
this genre-defying composer and
virtuosic player of the bandoneón
(the tango accordion) has only
expanded in the years since his
death, in 1992, to the point where
he takes his place amongst 20thcentury greats, of whatever branch
of music.

Rightly, his work is at the epicenter of the upcoming Tango and Malambo Festival in Santa Barbara: the Santa Barbara Symphony's program (February 14 and 15 at the Arlington) features the premiere of his only known full orchestral work, *Buenos Aires: Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos*, from 1953, and also a version of one of his bestloved pieces, *Adiós Nonino*, written in 1959 in homage to his late father.

Part of the almost mystical allure of Piazzolla's music and life has to do with his stubborn iconoclasm. He was a visionary who ultimately helped bring tango to new levels of international attention while concurrently suffering a stigma from purists of the form. Comparisons between Piazzolla and Duke Ellington are particularly apt. As with Ellington and his powerful

evolutionary relationship with jazz,

Piazzolla both mastered the tango

and systematically changed the face of the music to suit a new innovative idea of what the music could be. He heard that tango could be, in short, ear music and concert music.

TANGO: THE STUFF OF TIMELESS WONDER

Born in Mar de Plata, Argentina, his family moved to New York City when he was a child, where he soaked up the music of Ellington and Gershwin; the immortal tango legend, composer-singer Carlos Gardel; and Bach, among other influences. After returning to Argentina for his teen years, he went to Paris to study with the famous teacher Nadia Boulanger, who advised him to return to his roots. He did, in a way, working in Buenos Aires and also New York, while devising a sophisticated new language, dubbed Nuevo Tango.

Before long, Piazzolla was world famous, synonymous with enlivening and internationalizing the tango culture, even though he was a rebel at heart. He had many ardent champions along the way, including Kip Hanrahan, the New York musician, producer, and head of the independent label American Clave. In the '80s, Hanrahan recorded Piazzolla many times (projects that have thankfully been reissued in recent years), but the acknowledged classic of their collaboration was Piazzolla's Tango: Zero Hour. The consummate Nuevo Tango suite was performed by his regular quintet -bandoneón, violin, piano, guitar, and bass adding up to a flexible mini-ensemble.

Since Piazzolla's death, one

of his greatest and most public supporters has been the acclaimed Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer, who has devoted himself to numerous Piazzolla projects, including recent recordings of the *tango operita* called *Maria de Buenos Aires* and his *Tango Ballet*. On an active musician level, Kremer apparently learned what many listeners have long known: Piazzolla is highly habit-forming.

Piazzolla's music is about conflicting, simultaneous impulses. It can suggest smoldering sexuality, dusky melancholia, and rigorous discipline. It can have the close-to-the-vest emotionality of urban folk music, and dip into the formality of a fugue without warning. The music, can suggest a close kinfolk to jazz's loose, improvisatory expression, and the sweet romantic purr of folk tradition. It can also heed the precision-geared designs of classical music, swerving from Baroque rationality to post-Bartók gnarl. It's slippery yet palpable, the stuff of timeless wonder.

Nice to have a good taste of it finally hit Santa Barbara.

SELECTIVE LISTENING:

Astor Piazzolla and the New Tango Quintet,

Tango: Zero Hour (American Clave)

Astor Piazzolla and the New Tango Quintet,

La Camorra (Nonesuch)

Kronos Quartet, *Five Tango Sensations* (Nonesuch)

Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Musica, Maria de Buenos Aires (Nonesuch) Gidon Kremer,

Tracing Astor (Nonesuch)

Love and Tango.

Two Festivals Coincide with Passion and Latin Culture • by Alison Fraunhar

n addition to the strong slate of Latin American and Spanish films at the film festival, in conjunction with the Tango & Malambo Festival and UCSB Arts & Lectures, the SBIFF is presenting several films related to the history, practice, and life of the Argentinean dance form, tango. They range from a documentary about the history and meaning of tango (*Tango: The Obsession*), to a reflexive film about dance and film (*Tango*), and a film that situates tango as a living expression of identity and exile in the context of Argentina's military dictatorship (*Tango: The Exile of Gardel*).

Tango: The Obsession (Boucher, 1998) uses interviews and dance cinematography combined with archival material to narrate the story of tango, from its origins in the second- and third-generation Argentinean cowboys and the black descendants of slaves. The music, the dance scenes, and the interviews are charming and instantly pulls the viewer into this fascinating world.

Carlos Saura's film *Tango* (1998) is a rigorous, formalist attempt to use the filmic medium to communicate the experience of dance. Underneath the cultural codes of passion and melodrama, through which Saura frames dance forms like tango and flamenco, there is a deeper sense that artwork (in all media), seeks to perform the impossible task of finding a language to evoke the creative process to a larger audience.

Fernando Solanas is perhaps best known for his stunning film *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968). Here, in *Tango: The Exile of Gardel* (1985) he turns his political intelligence and avant-garde aesthetic to the story of a group of Argentinean exiles living in Paris, and their attempts to mount a show (a "tangedy"—part tango, part tragedy, and part comedy) loosely based on the life of beloved tango icon Carlos Gardel. It is equally a meditation on the relation between art, life, and politics. Solanas' vision is never less than incisive.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRI., FEB. 6

Festival Opening: An event benefiting the S.B. Symphony, with dancers Sandor and Parissa. 6-8 p.m. El Paseo Courtyard. \$100. Call 898-9386 (reservations required).

SAT., FEB. 7

Tango Lessons with Tango Santa Barbara. 2-5 p.m. Paseo Nuevo Mall (in case of rain, Nordstrom). Free.

Film: Tango by Carlos Saura. 4 p.m. at Metro 4 Theatre, 618 State St. \$8.50. Call 963-4408 or visit *www.Ticketmaster.com.*

Tango and Malambo. Performance by State Street Ballet. 8 p.m. Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St. \$20-\$42.50.

SUN., FEB. 8

Tango and Malambo. Performance by State Street Ballet. 2 p.m. Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St. \$20-\$42.50. Call 963-0761.

Film: Exiles of Gardel. 7 p.m. Metro 4 Theatre, 618 State St. \$8.50. Call 963-4408 or visit *www.Ticketmaster.com*.

MON., FEB. 9

Film: Tango: The Obsession, and demo by Tango Santa Barbara. 7:30 p.m. UCSB's Campbell Hall. \$6 general, \$5 students. Call 893-3535.

TUE., FEB. 10

Dances of the Americas. Concert for Young People performed by the S.B.

Symphony. 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Arlington Theatre, 1317 State St. Free.

Conversation: The Tango

Phenomenon. 2 p.m. Faulkner Gallery, S.B. Public Library. Free. Call 962-7653. **Film: Il Postino**. 7:30 p.m. Riviera

Theatre, 2044 Alameda Padre Serra. \$7. Call 963-4408 or 963-9503.

WED. FEB. 11

Forum: Tango. 2-4 p.m. UCSB's Music Dept., room 1213. Free, seating is limited. Call 893-3261.

Milonga! Social Dance. 9-11 p.m. Café Buenos Aires, 1316 State St. Free. Call 963-0242.

THU., FEB. 12

The Story of Tango, with dancers Sando and Parissa. 8 p.m. UCSB's Lotte Lehmann Hall. \$12 general, \$7 students. Call 893-7001.

Tango at El Paseo, with live tango band. 5-7 p.m. 10 El Paseo. Free. Call 962-6050.

Tango at Bogart's Café, with live tango band. 9:30 p.m.-midnight Bogart's, 1114 State St. Free. Call 965-8001.

FRI., FEB. 13

Tango at S0h0, with live tango dance band. 9 p.m.-12:30 a.m. SOhO, 1221 State St., Victoria Court. \$5. Call 962-7776.

SAT., FEB. 14

Tango Lessons with Tango Santa Barbara. 2-5 p.m. Paseo Nuevo Mall (in case of rain, Nordstrom). Free.

Grand Finale: S.B. Symphony performs *The Soul of Tango.* 8 p.m. Arlington Theatre, 1317 State St. \$23-\$48. Call 963-4408.

SUN., FEB. 15

Tango at Border's, with live tango band. Noon-4 p.m. Border's Books, 900 State St. Free. Call 899-3668.

Grand Finale: S.B. Symphony performs *The Soul of Tango.* 3 p.m. Arlington Theatre, 1317 State St. \$23-\$48. Call 963-4408.