

CELEBRATING SENIORS  
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# Senior Living™

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A photograph of an elderly couple dancing outdoors. The woman is on the left, wearing a black top with a colorful rainbow-like pattern on the shoulder. The man is on the right, wearing a black turtleneck sweater. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background shows a marina with many sailboats and a grassy area.

## Stepping Out!

Making New Friendships...  
Rekindling Old Ones

Romance on the Dance Floor

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# Music for the Soul

BY LEE MASSEY

“**T**he Argentine tango is the *only* tango,” says Claude Esposito with a smile. “It is in my blood.”

Claude and his wife, Hazel Baxter, are part of the Lower Mainland’s revival of this sultry, slow, seductive dance. During the ’80s, the tango shows began to reappear, after many dormant years, around the world. This coincided with Claude’s renewed interest in the music, although it took another 10 years for the couple to take their first bold steps at a milonga (evening dance).

Those in the tango world may recognize the name Genaro Esposito, a world-renowned tango musician, songwriter, and Claude’s father. Genaro moved from Buenos Aires, the birthplace of the tango, to Paris in 1920, where he and his band members had a contract to play their music. The music of the bandoneon was part of Claude’s formative years. When his father died, Claude was only nine years old, but the music had “penetrated his soul.” Claude’s mother had died when he was only 11 months old.

“If I had not rediscovered the dance, my father would have remained just a memory for me,” he says. “But now I have some of his recordings, photos and stories of his life.” ([www.genaro-esposito.com](http://www.genaro-esposito.com))

The “forgotten world” of the Argentine Tango was about to be revealed to Claude.

He and Hazel shared a life of traveling, skiing and dancing, while working at full-time jobs. Retirement for Claude meant more time to tango, and Hazel too felt the draw to the world of this mysterious dance. They started with lessons. It was not long before Claude was helping with the teaching;

as Claude says, “I grew up dancing.”

The tango continues to gain popularity at the Tuesday evening milonga, attracting people from around the world who discovered the La Tangueria Esposito’s website. The meeting of VSO musician Linda Lee Thomas was serendipitous: she introduced Claude to Edouard Pecourt, a music historian, who had in his collection photos, sheet music, and original 78 records of Gen-

and challenging.”

There are two styles of tango. Salon Tango can be performed on an open dance floor with lots of space, and the dancers are close but with some airspace between their bodies; their movements are described as “generous.” The dancers of the Milonguero style hold each other tightly as they coil together on the dance floor. Dancing requires physical determination.



Photos: Lee Massey

aro Esposito. This connection brought Claude full circle back to his father and the music of tango!

Claude explains the tango: “There is no set pattern, and the leader (usually the man) has to choreograph the dance. His dancing partner has to know how to follow the subtle signs of the leader.”

Hazel explains, “As a partner, I have to learn how to read the signals of the leader. A dance is always interesting

“The dance can be done as a ‘simple walk’ or using more complicated steps,” says Hazel. “It’s a matter of learning slowly and, like any exercise, building up stamina. The complexity of the dance and the emotional response are factors in keeping the mind and body healthy.”

Tango is the magic word that begins new friendships and takes Claude and Hazel to places such as France, Spain, England, Holland and Argentina. The



tango is performed with the same body language around the world, which allows Claude and Hazel to attend a milonga in Barcelona and dance with locals. The tango community in any city is much like the tango community in Vancouver: it is small, filled with teachers, enthusiasts and students; and welcoming to everyone.

Arrangements for the second annual VanTangoFest are underway; Claude and Hazel enjoy helping with this exciting event. At a time in life when many people wind down, Claude and Hazel have found new friends and new interests that keep them active and healthy. When asked how they maintain their high-energy lifestyle, Claude says with passion, "It's the music; it speaks to your soul."