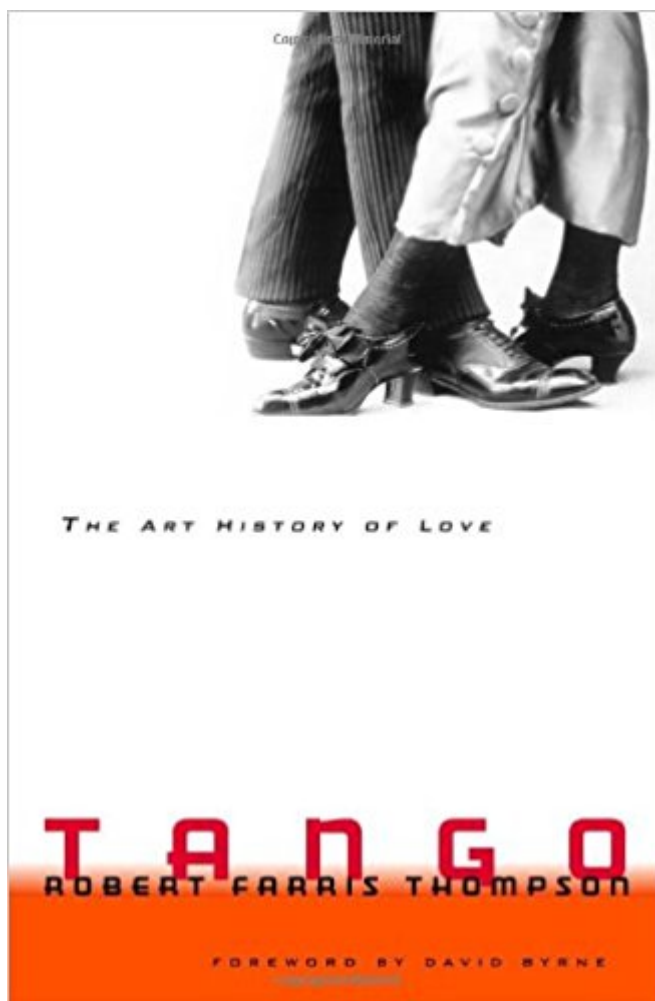


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# Tango: The Art History Of Love



## Synopsis

In this generously illustrated book, world-renowned Yale art historian Robert Farris Thompson gives us the definitive account of tango, “the fabulous dance of the past hundred years and the most beautiful, in the opinion of Martha Graham. From its syncretic evolution in the nineteenth century partaking of European, Andalusian-Gaicho, and, unbeknownst to many, African influences to its representations by Hollywood and dramatizations in dance halls throughout the world, Thompson shows us tango not only as brilliant choreography but also as text, music, art, and philosophy of life. As he did in his classic *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*, Thompson, in this book, “takes his subject in the round, not in any specialized or compartmentalized manner. He is part anthropologist, part art critic, part musicologist, part student of religion and philosophy, and entirely an enthusiastic partisan of what he writes about” (The New York Times). Passionately argued; unparalleled in its research, its synthesis, and its depth of understanding; and written with revelatory clarity, *Tango: The Art History of Love* is a monumental achievement.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Here at last is an antidote to those trite coffee-table books that treat the tango with purple prose. In language no doubt inspired by the lyrics of its subject, this serious volume examines and celebrates the cultural history of the famed Argentine dance, conveying its real passion and the author's passion for it. Thompson, the renowned Yale Africanist and art historian,

convincingly evokes the often-obscured African roots of the dance, whose name comes from the Ki-Kongo word for "moving in time to a beat." He then explores the tango's relationship to cakewalk and ragtime, Cuba's habanera and Rossini's operas, along with the mutual admiration between the father of tango, Carlos Gardel, and the tenor Enrico Caruso. Thompson tells the stories of tango's composers and performers, from the female composer Eladia Blázquez to poet and lyricist Jorge Luis Borges. Hollywood versions of the dance pale once Thompson begins to mine the riches of tango's rhythms, lyrics, philosophy and steps. He explains the sinuous figure-eight footwork of ochos, the boleó circular leg thrusts and the dramatic corte y quebrada cut-and-break steps that mimic the real-life emotional combat of relationships. There may be too much detail for generalist readers, and even devotees will need to pause to digest all of the information given. Still, for fans of dance, music and cultural history, this is the real deal. B&w illus. (Sept. 30) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Thompson . . . inflames us with his reverence for the form." Mikhail Baryshnikov "Thompson helps us understand the way artistry and ancestry combine to make an art form of the body." The Washington Post "Elegant. . . . Uplifting and timely. . . . Thompson rescues tango from a one-dimensional tristesse, mining in its working-class origins emotions of defiance, freedom, self-control, humor, love, and redemption." Foreign Affairs "[Thompson treats tango as narrative art, literature and way of life. . . . By extensively tracing the lines of this 'rich suite of moves,' Thompson's work gives a dance started in the early 1900s the weight of a centuries-old form." Newsweek From the Trade Paperback edition.

Good purchase. It is very in depth, sometimes over my head. This book goes into great detail of the background and origins of Argentine Tango. Every time I go back through it, I find something that I did not understand or see the previous times. Don't plan on reading it and understanding it in one night.

I've read other work by this author and always enjoy his scholarly yet approachable style. Dancers, dance anthropologists and other cultural scholars might enjoy this.

This book was recommended to me by a fellow Tango student. It seems to be one of the best out there for those whose dancing has led to intellectual curiosity about the Argentine culture, politics, and music. This understanding contributes to how I dance Tango today. As I learn new dances, I

hope to get beyond being mechanically competent, to dancing this Tango from some inner place. This is one of those books that is helping me get there. There is a very good section on the "how-to" of the dance which will be helpful to dancers with some experience. Beginners will need a little floor time to recognize and absorb the instructions.

Extremely historical detail, poetically phrased, my 7 years of tango meant i could grasp most of the terms and see them danced out in my head. A REVELATION. A delight. Great for the new aficionado, perfect to read much later in one's evolution as a dancer. YOUTUBING the dancers and movies referenced brings this book to more life. Without this book, one can be somewhat nonplussed by various tango mores. Cayengue rhythm and style within Milonga beat. The underbelly of Africanisms within the European format, the contradiction of seething versus discrete we have learned to love is Tango.

I never knew there was so much to the tango until I read this book. The author clearly is very passionate about tango, the history of tango and the different cultures and dance styles that merged into tango. He broke this book down to the history, the cultures, the music and the dance. Cultures from Cuba, Spain, Moorish Spain, Kongo, Yoruba and others scattered all feature into the development of the Tango. From early recording, early movies to modern movies and current musicians (Pablo Aslan is featured!) this book makes for an interesting read and makes for a desire to visit Buenos Aires.

Certainly a book without peer review, no intellectual or academic would have recommended this book as worthwhile to be published. It has many inconsistencies, factually wrong with dates, misleading and unable to provide accurate basic information whenever he refers to facts, history, development of the dance, etc. The writer does not have enough knowledge of the Spanish language as to make a summary translation of the main tango lyrics he refers to in the chapters, e.g. interpretation of the word "Cambalache" if anything is appalling. I consider this book to be an affront to anything to do with tango as a subject area of study and research.

Tango: The Art History of Love is a great read, lots of interesting historic detail,... not all of it flattering to Argentine historians

Yet another very well researched art history by Yale's highly esteemed Bob Thompson. His passion

for the music, dance, art, and culture of the Tango crackles like an electrical jolt on every page. Buy this book!

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