

Why I do Queer Tango

by Maria Boutchkova

If you don't need convincing to try Queer tango, please come along on Wednesdays either for a lunch or an evening class (12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm) at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus), otherwise, read on for why I do it.

Over the last three years, I have been dancing on and off at the Blues and Balboa events organized by <http://www.edinbop.co.uk/>. I like the crowd there, along with the spirit of the dancing because being able to lead or follow regardless of one's presented gender is common and accepted. Before moving to Edinburgh, I had chosen to practice flamenco in Montreal for two important reasons: first, because this dance has very little partner dynamic and second, for its emotional intensity. This intensity, in my mind, can be found in tango as well, and it has been an unfulfilled dream of mine to be able to learn it one day. But the very rigid traditional roles of leading and following, not to mention the strict ritual of eye contact and nods across the dance floor before inviting someone to dance, have placed it in the "I don't do this" category for me.

Until I saw an ad for Queer tango this summer, and attended several classes in July with the amazing, inspiring, igniting Louise.

One of the rules I live by as a parent and as a human being, is to act in a way and use a type of language that challenges oppressive stereotypes. For example, I

avoid saying to little girls how cute or pretty they are, and instead I ask them what their favourite story is, or ask to see something they recently drew or made. Imagine how I felt,

when Louise told us in the very first Queer tango class that we would invent our own language and instead of saying lead and follow, that we would use the words suggest and interpret.

To me Louise's will to start this class and use a new language is not only an act of activism that is in line with my beliefs but also has been a precious gift – to be able to enter the world of this magical dance that used to be inaccessible to me. I can't wait to share this gift with as many people as possible, and I know Louise feels the same.

Here is my favourite description on how Louise teaches tango:

“Louise's philosophy of tango is that it is about awareness and connection. To tango well, you have to be able to pay attention. Some people have called tango ‘walking with attitude’, but she thinks it's ‘walking with awareness’ – of yourself, of the other person, of everybody else in the room, of the music. In the world and in life in general, people are often looking for different ways to connect really well with other people. As human beings, we thrive with connection, and tango is a fabulous way of being connected.”

Please join us on Wednesdays at lunchtime or in the evening for one or two hours. The lunchtime classes are 12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; the evening classes are 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm. They are at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus). Find out more at <http://www.qte.dance/> and/or join the Queer tango Edinburgh Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/285415031797624/>.