

Jorge Torres – A man who dances...

“*Enflechado!*”

What better adjective to describe what happened to Jorge the first time he saw his beautiful Chino? He was struck. At first sight...

She smiles when I ask her the old run-of-the-mill question: “How did you two meet?” I imagine a Forever Tango tournée in Japan and a chance encounter in some exotic place in Tokyo. But no, it all happened four years ago in New York, at the well-known All Night *Milonga*, at Stepping Out. Chino had just started to dance tango and was quietly sitting at her table, when suddenly she felt someone grab her hand and there she was, literally transported to the dance floor.

“He was *so* rude!!” she exclaims, still steaming. To no avail she pleaded to be let go, to be allowed to go back to her seat. Who was this guy, anyway? And why was he so persistent?

As soon as he entered the crowded room, Jorge’s eyes were only on Chino. He took it all in: her mesmerizing profile, her jet-black hair, her shy smile. Smitten, he vowed to conquer her. “By the third song in the *tanda*, she stopped being angry and she surrendered...” Jorge nods, proud of his victorious determination. He went, he saw, he conquered, to paraphrase Cesar, the Roman Emperor. After the dance, he took her back to her table (polite, old-school manners of course) and everyone descended on Chino, like buzzing bees.

“Do you know *who* he is??? Do you realize *who* invited you to dance? Can you believe that you were chosen by *him*?” And no, she had no idea and wasn’t particularly impressed by the good looking, silver haired man who had just steered her through four skillful tangos.

Jorge, at that time on Broadway with Forever Tango, began a nightly patrol of all possible *milongas*, but Chino was nowhere to be seen. Until he finally met her again at Il Campanello and... the rest is history.

On a quiet November afternoon, I’m at their Financial District apartment and Jorge holds beautiful one-year old Faline in his arms, while Oscar, the friendliest-ever dachshund is desperately trying to steal everybody’s attention away from the baby. As Chino proudly surveys her family, Jorge answers my questions.

I want to know all that there is to know about tango. Maybe he’s got the same powers as Tinkerbell, maybe after brushing my wings with his I’ll be able to fly? Maybe I’ll finally discover The Truth, unveil the mystery of this dance, the magic of this music, the depth of these powerful lyrics. Maybe I’ll be able to pass all this knowledge to my TangoINK readers? Instead, I discover that I’m interviewing a *normal* man, albeit an extraordinary person.

“I always wanted to be *a man who dances*,” states Jorge, with great humility. And it’s precisely with this spirit that Jorge Torres manages to blend real life with fame and success. Of course there is a secret and it’s called gratefulness. Before any exhibition -- every time he goes on stage -- Torres concentrates on how much he owes his family. He remembers their sacrifices, their love, their never-faltering trust, and only then he’s ready to give all of himself to his public. Humanity and humility allow this great dancer to continue his path toward excellence.

It all started when Jorge was about three years old and would dance at the first note of any song the radio broadcasted. At that time the Torres family was strikingly poor -- indigent is probably the best way to

describe their situation -- but *mama* Dionisia wasn't the type to give up. She managed to enroll the help of Norberto Guichanduc, a famous dancer from Argentina's Ballet Nacional Folclorico, and that's how Jorge's trip to stardom began, in a modest garage in Merlo -- together with another hundred and fifty local kids, two long hours away from Buenos Aires. Years later, only thirteen teenagers were chosen to attend the Colon, the prestigious theater of Buenos Aires, where they would receive rigorous ballet training. Jorge's family had to endure a grueling daily schedule, commuting under every weather and every circumstance between the Colon in Buenos Aires and grammar school. *Papa* Antonio saw to it, making sure that his kid would study and excel in both places. "He wasn't terribly convinced about my career as a ballet dancer. After all he came from the Argentinean country side and, well, it wasn't so *macho* to have a pirouetting son, right?" Torres remembers his father silent doubts but also his blind, steadfast support. "I always knew I needed to fly to another space," he adds. One can only imagine the pride of the Torres parents the first time they saw their child on stage, limelight shining on his every step, young Jorge surging above everyday's life, ready to reach the top of his art.

"The future is in your legs," Norberto had told him. A few years later tango was officially accepted in the Colon's program and the best local dancers invited to perform. Jorge Torres, the tango dancer, was born.

Tango Argentino, the show, took the world by surprise and afterward nothing was ever the same. Tango was, once again, a big deal and the audiences confirmed their

renewed passion by swelling venues around the globe.

Jorge Torres comes across as a surprisingly, almost naively, sincere man. A great star unaffected by fame, his smile projects the warmth of his soul; it opens up his face, gently streaming into his eyes as he looks at you. One of the most endearing aspects of his personality is his need to share both his art and his passion for teaching.

"What's tango?" I ask him the usual cliché question.

"The best way to express myself," Jorge replies immediately. "Selfishness always gets in the middle of true greatness," he adds. "Today most dancers don't go through the discipline of ballet learning. That's why they don't respect their partners, because they are not trained to work as a team. It's more difficult to be a group dancer than a soloist," he remarks, shaking his head...