

Tango: Passionate Encounters in a Globalizing World

Kathy Davis

Dancing Argentinean tango is a global phenomenon. Since its origin among immigrants from the slums of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, it has crossed and re-crossed many borders. However, never before has tango been danced by so many people and in so many different places as today. Argentinean tango is more than a specific music, style of dancing, and dance sub-culture. It is also a cultural imaginary which embodies intense passion, hyper-heterosexuality, and dangerous exoticism. In the wake of its latest revival, tango has become both a cultural symbol of Argentinean national identity and a transnational cultural space in which a modest, yet growing number of dancers from different parts of the globe meet in passionate encounters on the dance floor.

In her forthcoming book *Passionate Encounters: Dancing Tango in a Globalizing World* (NYU Press), Kathy Davis addresses the question why a dance from another era and another place could appeal to men and women from different parts of the world and what happens to them as they become caught up in the tango salon culture. Drawing upon interviews and ethnographical research in Amsterdam and Buenos Aires, she shows how people who dance tango negotiate the ambivalences, contradictions, and hierarchies of gender, sexuality, and global relations of power between North and South in which Argentinean tango is – and has always been – embroiled.