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**Amber:** Hello! Today, we meet Christine Denniston who's been to Argentina to learn about one of the world's most passionate dances, the Tango.

So find a partner and get your dancing shoes on because we'll be having a Tango lesson later in the programme! But first, we find out what makes the Argentine Tango so special.

The dance began in the 19th century among the poor people in Buenos Aires, and, as we'll hear, it developed into the city's 'mass culture' during the 1930s, '40s and '50s - it was 'enormously popular' at this time; it was the entertainment of 'the masses'. (The masses are the ordinary people who form the largest group in a society.)

Christine calls this period 'The Golden Age'. (This is a beautiful expression to describe a period of time when a particular art was very successful. For example, we can talk about 'the golden age of cinema'.) We'll listen a couple of times to Christine describing the Argentine Tango. The first time, try to catch the three things she says go together with 'the dance' to make Argentine Tango so special.

### **Christine Dennison**

We tend to think of Tango as *just* the dance, but in Argentina it's much bigger than that. As well as the dance, there's the music (which is a very rich and complex tradition, really as broad as Jazz), and also a lot of emphasis on the poetry of the lyrics and on the art of singing Tango, and The Golden Age is the period when the music had gone through a transition where it had become much more sophisticated and complex. At the same time, the dancing had

become enormously popular, so it was really the mass culture of Buenos Aires specifically (which is the largest city in Argentina), and singers within bands were singing *for* dancers as an instrument within the orchestra rather than as soloists.

**Amber:** So Christine says Argentine Tango is not made up of just the dance, it's also the music, 'the poetry of the lyrics' – the beautiful and emotional words of the songs – and 'the art of singing' – the skill of the singers.  
Listen again and try to catch how the singers would sing when people were Tango dancing in The Golden Age.

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**Amber:** So the Tango dancers were the most important people in the room! Even the singers would sing as if they were part of the band or the orchestra, rather than as 'soloists'. A soloist in a musical performance is someone who is given a chance to perform on their own and so is given special attention.  
Next, as promised, we have an Argentine Tango lesson! Christine will show us how the dance should be done.  
As you'll hear, it's a 'couple dance', a dance for two people. As you listen, try to work out what position the two dancers should always be in. Here's a tip – she says it's really like 'a hug', an embrace!

## **Christine Dennison and Jenni Murray**

The most important thing to remember about Tango is that it's not a dance that happens on the level of the feet, it's a dance that happens on the level of the hearts. So the thing that needs to be remembered is that we need to keep our two hearts directly in front of each other all the time.

(Go on. You lead!)

OK, here we go! There we are! And it's actually quite possible for me to turn you around barely moving my feet at all, because it's the movement of the hearts that matters. So long as your heart stays directly in front of mine, it's easy for you to know where to go.

(But what is it with the heartbeat then? Why is that so important in it?)

One of the really interesting differences between Tango and the other couple dances is that the hold is slightly different, that we hold directly in front of each other, it's really a hug, where we hold hands on one side, just so the neighbours don't gossip - so that they know that we're dancing! But really it's about taking somebody lovely and taking them in your arms, and the moving around is just an excuse!

**Amber:** How did you do? Christine says the dancers have to keep their hearts 'directly in front of each other' all the time. Then, it's easy to Tango!