

Spirited couples give tango a twirl

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It takes two to tango, and that was proved 25 times over Saturday as Paseo Nuevo played host to some two dozen or so couples learning about the Argentine dance as part of the city's Tango and Malambo Festival.

The 10-day festival, which concludes today, takes its title from the music and dance traditions of urban (hence the tango) and rural (malambo) Argentina, according to organizers.

As the Argentinian tune "La Yumba" played, dance instructor Brian Griffin gracefully demonstrated basic tango dance steps to about 50 people who gathered for three hours of free dance lessons.

"Anybody can do it," said Mr. Griffin.

Most tango dances are improvised walking steps that are led by the man, he said.

"He has to decide which move he's going to make next and she follows."

Leslie Lipman, a financial analyst who has danced tango for about two years, said the dance floor is the only place she will "follow a man completely,"

"He protects you, he shows you off and all you have to do is look beautiful," she said. "It's a very graceful dance."

The festival is a collaborative effort by the Santa Barbara Symphony, the State Street Ballet of Santa Barbara, the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, UCSB Arts and Lectures, Tango Santa Barbara, the Paseo Nuevo and Caf  Buenos Aires. It is also a product of the Ben-Dor Music Discovery Project, since the festival itself was the "brain child" of the symphony music director Gisele Ben-Dor.



The festival follows the lead of Ms. Ben-Dor's Revueltas Music Festival in January 2000, which drew favorable attention to Santa Barbara and its the symphony.

The festival closes today with a live tango band at Border's Books, Music & Cafe, 900 State St., from noon to 2 p.m. That performance is free.

At 3 p.m., the Santa Barbara Symphony will perform "The Soul of Tango" at the Arlington Theatre. Tickets are \$35 and \$40; contact the Arlington box office at 963-4408.

FRANK BOTT / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Joining the crowd at Paseo Nuevo, Santa Barbarans John Brown and Michele Zuzalek try out the new steps they've learned while more seasoned dancers Leslie Lipman and Rich Howe, above left, show passers-by some sophisticated moves. About 50 people showed up for the free lessons, which ran for three hours.