

Students take a spin with the tango

Claire Mauro
International Reporter

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA — One of the first things students studying abroad in Argentina encounter is the prominence of a sensual and sultry dance: the Argentine tango.

The tango, which is as much of a mixture of cultures as Buenos Aires itself, made its first appearance in the capital city around 1900. It was about the same time as immigrants arrived from all over Europe and gauchos, or cowboys, came from the provinces.

Each group brought its own developed form of dance. They lived together in conventillas, or apartments similar to tenement houses, and these styles of dance began to mesh together to form the tango.

The tango was first danced in brothels. Men danced together in order to practice their moves before asking a woman to join them. Today, the tango is taught and performed in night clubs called tango milongas.

Allison Yates, Carly Goodkin and Helen Wright, all college students studying in Buenos Aires with the Council of International Educational Exchange, knew that learning the tango was a must when they arrived in

Argentina.

Yates, a junior at Indiana University, said the main thing she knew about the tango before arriving in Argentina was it was a slower and more “sensual” dance.

Wright, a junior at Elon University, said she has taken a few salsa lessons in the past.

“How could I come to Argentina and not try dancing the tango?” she said.

Their first experience with the Argentine tango was at a tango milonga called La Viruta.

“When I first got to La Viruta, I was shocked at the size of it,” Yates said. “It’s an enormous building and there were so many people there. I liked the way they kept the dim lighting, it felt like the perfect atmosphere.”

Wright described her first impression as being a bit overwhelming, but she jumped right in.

“I quickly got involved and once I felt more comfortable with the steps, it was really fun,” she said.

While a lot of people that night ended up dancing with friends from their own program, Yates, Goodkin and Wright all stepped out of their comfort zone and were pleasantly surprised.

“More than anything, I asked other people to dance,” Goodkin said. “I am not socially inhibited, and I would much rather be rejected than waste my time waiting for someone to approach me.”

With that attitude in mind, Goodkin found a partner who was just as willing. When the instructors asked for volunteers to demonstrate, they were the first to step into the circle.

“I had only danced with my partner for one song, and I had never met him before that,” Goodkin said. “I was pleasantly surprised that he was ready to dive in and dance in front of everyone with me.”

Yates’s experience taught her that the tango, like swing dancing in the United States, is a dance that was popular when current grandparents were teens. Now the tango is making its comeback in popularity in Argentina.

“I remember one of the men I danced with who was 85 years old,” Yates said. “He said he has been dancing tango since he was a teenager, and for the past three years he has come to La Viruta every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night.”

As they were dancing together, he told Yates about his life.

“I got emotional when he started



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KATE LEFEBVRE

The tango is performed at tango milongas, or night clubs, such as La Viruta.

to speak about his wife that just passed on,” she said. “He said ‘Era la mujer mas bella, era el amor de mi vida,’ which means ‘she was the most beautiful woman; she was the love of my life.’ It was very touching. He was very patient with me and tried to even teach me some new moves.”

After their first experience in a tango milonga, Yates, Goodkin and Wright could not get enough of the tango. All three students made goals for the steps that they plan to learn.

“I definitely want to learn some of the fun leg embellishments that women can do,” Goodkin said.

Study abroad trips to Egypt permitted post-revolution

Michael Papich
Reporter

Students will be able to return to Egypt to study after the height of Egypt’s 2011 revolution closed Elon University’s study abroad program at American University in Cairo.

Students who attended a recent interest meeting with a representative from AUC could be the first from Elon to study in Egypt since the program was suspended. Applications for students to go to AUC were reopened last spring when the study abroad office determined that the situation had stabilized.

“The state department travel warning that was initially issued was lifted,” said Paul Geis, associate director of study abroad and manager of programs in the Middle East.

No Elon students are currently studying abroad at AUC, but two students attended the program’s informa-

tion session Sept. 10.

“I really wanted to see the museums in Cairo and meet the people and learn the culture and study a little bit of Egyptology,” said junior Immanuel Bryant, one of the students who attended the interest meeting. “They were the first writers and inventors.”

Students who had applied for the spring 2012 semester later switched to study abroad in Amman, Jordan after the study abroad office warned that the Egyptian election might cause disturbances that would force them to leave the university.

“We spoke to the students very frankly and said, ‘You can go, we have not canceled the program, but if you leave the program too late, there would not be other viable options to switch into,’” Geis said.

Egypt is currently being monitored by Elon’s study abroad department to see if a similar warning will be made for

the spring 2013 semester, but there are no current applicants for the program.

AUC has incorporated the events of the 2011 revolution into its classes, having students go to Tahrir Square, where most protestors gathered, to collect data about the revolution. The university also held civil society classes open to the public with debates about the country’s elections and talks about how to get engaged in politics.

According to AUC admissions counselor Dominique Miles, who led the information session, these campus events fit in with the tradition of the school.

“As the revolution in Tahrir Square began, students at AUC helped workers at the university organize to strike for better compensation. But the political and social activity does not hinder the academic experience, according to Miles.

“Everything happens in an orga-

nized fashion,” Miles said. “Nothing disrupts class time.”

AUC has contingency plans to get students who are studying abroad back to their home countries if needed, a plan which was implemented when the travel warning for Egypt was issued

in January 2011. According to Miles, many abroad students did not want to leave the country.

“Students knew that Egypt is not Tahrir Square, Cairo is not this little square,” Miles said. “It’s a city, so other things are going on.”

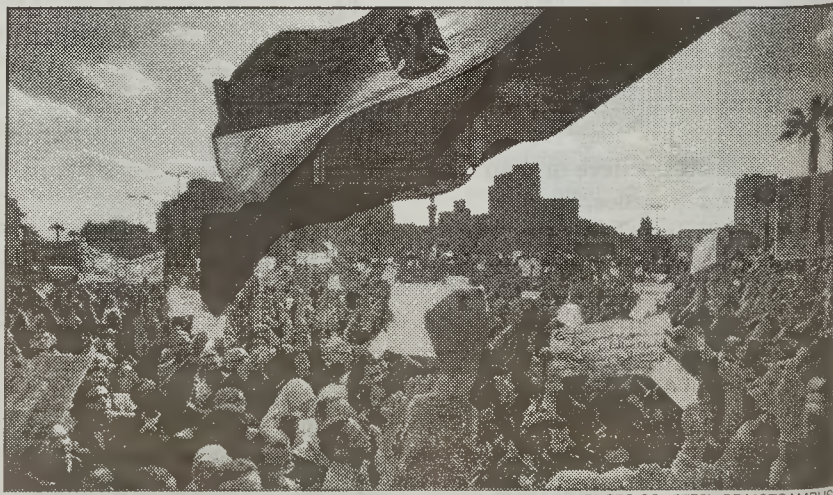


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Protests in Cairo in 2011 prevented Elon students from studying abroad in Egypt.