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In Berlin, Twirling the Tango

By **Emilie Trice** December 3, 2010 6:00 am

When it comes to dance, Berlin may be best known for its decadent after-hours techno scene. But the German capital also boasts a vibrant tango culture that's considered by some to be second only to Buenos Aires.

Propped up by cheap rents, Berlin's tango venues range from decades-old ball houses to more eccentric and modern salons. Dance floors attract a wide swatch of the city's ubiquitous expat community, including an impressive range of ages, sexual preferences and, of course, technical prowess. Here are a few places to enjoy the tango scene, whether you are willing to give it a whirl or just watch.

On Tuesdays, beginners and seasoned dancers alike are welcome at **Clärchens Ballhaus** (Auguststrasse 24; 49-157-778-258-98), a legendary spot in the advanced stages of quaint decay; it also doubles as a beer garden and serves excellent pizza.

For an edgier, red-lighted ambiance, the **Roter Salon** (Linienstrasse 227; 49-30-4404-7195; www.roter-salon-berlin.de) at Berlin's historic Volksbühne (People's Theater) hosts Tangonacht on Wednesdays, from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m., occasionally with live musical accompaniment.

Red lights also signal the path into a post-industrial back courtyard and the entrance to **Tangoloft** (Gerichtstrasse 23; 49-30-4660-9779; tangoloft-berlin.de), a seductive, D.I.Y. operation in the gritty neighborhood of Wedding that radiates Berlin bohemia. Beginning Saturdays at 9 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m., dancers rotate against a converted factory backdrop, carefully renovated with architectural touches like salvaged stained glass windows. Since Tangoloft sometimes plays music other than tango, it's beginner-friendly and offers an unusually eclectic scene.

Tangoloft also holds introductory courses on Saturdays from 7:30 to 9 p.m. and intermediate classes on Wednesdays from 8 to 9:30 p.m. Like Berlin's annual Tango Festival, an international affair that takes place each May, Tangoloft celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, a considerable milestone indicative of Berlin's romantic attachment to the Argentine "dance of love."

For a comprehensive overview of tango events and locations in Berlin, check www.tangoberlin.de.

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