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# the scene

Salsa in the DMV ~ D.C. - Maryland - Virginia

SPRING 2009



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**in Portugal**

*Also in this issue:*

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[Salsa-Belly Dance Fusion] [Eileen Torres] [D.C. Salsa Congress]

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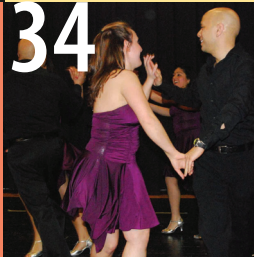
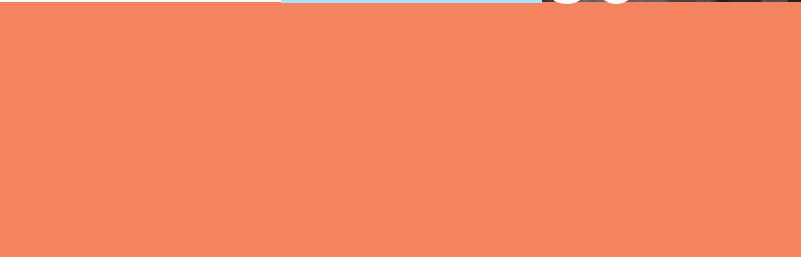


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# table of contents

Editor's Note .....	3
Staff .....	3
Salsa Legend: Larry Harlow .....	4
Dancer Spotlight .....	8
Eileen Torres: D.C.'s Salsa Ambassador .....	10
DJ's Corner: Interview with EricB .....	14
Say What? Salseros Weigh In .....	15
Shimmies and Shines: Fusing Belly Dance and Salsa .....	16
Be Scene Photo Collage .....	20
Cover Story: D.C.'s ClaveKazi in Portugal .....	22
Welcome to Habana Village .....	26
Surrounding Area Salsa .....	28
Sin Miedo .....	30
Patience, Practice and the Pursuit of Excellence .....	32
Salsa Etiquette .....	33
SAOCO D.C. ....	34
D.C. Salsa Congress .....	38





# the scene

## ADVERTISING

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by Kelly Reed

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- Color:** CMYK (4 color process)
- Format:** TIFF or JPEG
- Logos:** Vector (native) or an editable Eps file

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#### 4-COLOR PROCESS (CMYK):

This magazine will be produced using Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black(K) inks or more commonly called "CMYK." This involves "offset" printing. All colors are printed

together in layers and you can achieve any wide spectrum of full color (like you see in a color magazine). Liken it to RGB colors as you see on a TV screen—if you look close you will see all three spots of color Red, Green and Blue; but when you step back they all blend together. CMYK color works the same way to build full color images.

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# Editor's Note:



The Scene is alive in D.C. and I would like to extend a huge 'thank you' to the salsa community for welcoming our endeavor with open arms and support. I am ecstatic over all of the feedback that we have been receiving from friends, family, and strangers alike.

Please know that we take the constructive criticism just as seriously as the kudos and accolades, because we know that it will help us improve.

I feel truly blessed to be surrounded by such competent, diligent, and professional staff, all of who volunteer their time for The Scene.

Asking someone to volunteer their time is no easy task. Our staff is small and sometimes we find ourselves stretched thin and short on resources. We won't be able to write every story or cover every event. But we are doing our best to bring you a quality product and welcome your suggestions and your time, if you would like to contribute.

We hope to grow and eventually increase the number of articles we bring to you and the frequency with which we publish The Scene.

With all this momentum, I am excited to bring you the sophomore issue and look forward to your feedback.

LoRENZO Haire  
Editor in Chief, Founder

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the scene  
SPRING 2009

3

salsa Legend

# Larry Harlow

By Kira Zalan

El Judio  
Maravilloso



# Ask legendary salsa musician Larry Harlow what it is like to play in front of tens of thousands of fans in jam-packed stadiums, and he'll tell you it is "like a really great orgasm."

Wearing corduroy pants, a designer knit sweater and Adidas shoes in his 12th floor Upper West Side New York apartment, 70-year-old Harlow is surrounded by instruments, numerous awards—including a Grammy—and collectors' items such as original album covers from the Latin music label, Fania Records, that signed him up decades ago.

As Harlow talks, he waves his hands above his head as if he were conducting an orchestra. His countless stories often end with "ba-pa-da, bu-pa-da," the musical scattening equivalent to Seinfeld's "yada, yada, yada."

Born Lawrence Ira Kahn in 1939, Harlow is ethnically white and Jewish. He fell in love with the Latin music that blasted from the open windows of shops around his high school in Spanish Harlem. At 17, he rounded up a group of friends and went to Cuba for Christmas break.

"That was it," he said. "I got salsa'fied."

Harlow returned to Cuba a year later, this time taking along a tape recorder, cameras and music paper. He traveled around the island, learning and recording as much as he could. Some of those recordings now make up exclusive libraries that contain original and rare music preserved by music aficionados.

The looming revolution in Cuba sent Harlow back to New York on Christmas 1958, where he would eventually earn the name "El Judio Maravilloso" or "the marvelous Jew" from Latin music professionals. But it wasn't easy, he said, and it took years to prove himself. Negotiating and interviews proved difficult because

he didn't speak Spanish. He would later learn the language -- in bed, he said -- and become a *santero*, or a priest of a West African religion practiced in Cuba. This earned him prestige among the Fania musicians who would join later because the ceremonies are hierarchical and demand the younger to bow down in front of the older priests.

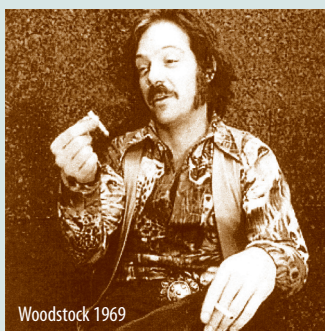
"I was a week older [within the religion] than Tito Puente," Harlow said with a laugh, "so Puente used

to ask first, 'is Harlow gonna be there?'" Puente was his mentor, Harlow said about the late band leader. "I stood so many nights in front of him in the Palladium collecting his broken drum sticks."

Harlow has been credited by musicians with both preserving the Cuban musical tradition and also modernizing it.

"Larry Harlow took Cuban music in its original form and gave it that extra New York edge," said Edwin Ortiz of D.C.'s Orquesta La Romana. "He was the master at that stuff. He took something that was already good and owned it, made it better."

The early 60s were formative years for many Latin musicians. As portrayed in the famous movie *Dirty Dancing*, the Catskill Mountain resorts in upstate New York attracted wealthy tourists during the summer months. Ballroom-style mambo, cha cha cha and rumba were popular among the predominantly Jewish clientele who vacationed in Cuba until the revolution. After nightly entertainment ended, musicians from different hotels would get together and hold jam





sessions. "That's when some of the best music was created," Harlow said, nostalgically, remembering jamming with musicians such as Ray Barretto, the Palmieri brothers, Cachao and Cheo Feliciano.

Harlow also said that he changed the look of salsa. "They used to wear these pointy shoes on stage," he said, describing the early mambo bands of the 50s and 60s that looked proper in matching suits. "I was a pot-smoking hippie. I brought that laid-back look to the stage."

In 1964, Fania Records was founded by Johnny Pacheco and Jerry Masucci. The label recruited the top Latin musicians, whose music was previously sold out of car trunks, and created a product known as "salsa." By the mid 70s, salsa exploded in popularity around the world.

The Woodstock era brought significant changes to the music as well. "We started writing songs that told real stories about war, humanity, politics and love," said Harlow. And it wasn't just the lyrics that became more complex during this era, he explained, but the music acquired "new layers" with added instruments like trombones, trumpets and multiple pianos.

Harlow would arrange music, compose, write and produce over 200 hit records for the label.

In 1973, Harlow launched a campaign to pressure the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences to add a Latin category to the Grammy awards. "We were attacking an American institution, and getting a lot of coverage from the media for it," said Izzy Sanabria, an emcee, album artist, publisher and promoter during the Fania era. After a two-year campaign, the first Latin

Grammy was presented to Eddie Palmieri in 1975.

"Harlow was a bit of a rebel in the business sense," said Sanabria and added, "maybe because he wasn't a Latino." Harlow said he tried to organize performers to protect their business interests from the label's management, particularly against Masucci, but they didn't back him.

These days, Harlow is his own business manager. He is busy reviving his Latin opera *Hommy* that was initially performed in 1973 at Carnegie Hall. The production brought Celia Cruz out of retirement in Mexico and back onto the stage. It also brought Latin music out of the *barrio* and into mainstream American culture, said Harlow.

Almost three decades later, *Hommy* again will be performed in San Juan with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra. The line-up is not yet finalized, but will likely include Choco Orta in Cruz's role, and old Fania stars like Ismael Miranda, Adalberto Santiago and Cheo Feliciano.

Harlow also will be part of the Fania All-Stars 20-city reunion tour called "El Ultimo Mambo," which is currently in planning stages.

Harlow has no plans of slowing down either. The grandfather of three continues to record albums, write new material, consult for documentaries and teach Afro-Cuban music to children and college students.

"I will die on stage," said Harlow.





## Did you know that Larry Harlow...

- plays six instruments?
- has his name on 350 albums?
- would be a toxicologist if he wasn't a musician?
- has practiced Santería for 34 years? The ring he always wears represents Ochún, the goddess of love.

**“It was a time of Vietnam and Woodstock, so we started writing songs that told real stories about WAR, humanity, politics and love.”**

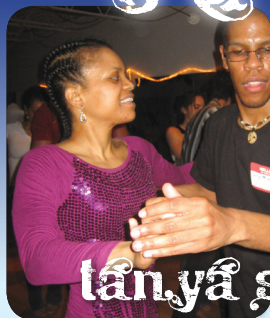


# dancer spotlight



jeffrey wong

**Place of birth:** Long Island, New York  
**Day job:** Video game patent examiner  
**Representing:** Arlington, VA  
**Dancing salsa:** Year and a half  
**Likely to be found:** The Salsa Room



tanya smith

**Place of birth:** Washington, D.C.  
**Day job:** Mortgage broker  
**Representing:** Washington, D.C.  
**Dancing salsa:** Four years  
**Likely to be found:** DC Dance Collective Social

## On1 or On2?

"Whichever the girl prefers."

## Dance Shoes or regular shoes?

"Dance shoes."

## Where did you discover salsa?

"Cecilia's, a few months before it became TSR."

## What makes a good dance?

"When both the leader and the follower enjoy the music and the dancing."

## What makes a bad dance?

"When the girl is only anticipating my moves."

## A favorite song to dance to?

"*Oiga, Mira, Vea* by Orquesta Guayacan."

## Are you addicted?

"Yes. I sometimes find myself doing shines/spins in elevators."

## What do you drink when you dance?

"Water."

## On1 or On2?

"On2."

## Dance Shoes or regular shoes?

"Dance shoes."

## Where did you discover salsa?

"Chief Ike's Mambo Room."

## What makes a good dance?

"A good attitude."

## What makes a bad dance?

"When the guy is doing choreography instead of leading."

## A favorite song to dance to?

"*Blah, Blah, Blah* by Johnny Blas."

## Are you addicted?

"Absolutely! I knew I was addicted when I began planning my vacations abroad based on the timing of salsa congresses happening in the countries I wanted to visit."

## What do you drink when you dance?

"Water."



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# SalsaMetro.Com

**SalsaMetro.Com** is a website dedicated to keeping you informed about Latin events in the D.C. Metro area.

**SalsaMetro.Com** sponsors the largest New Year's Eve Salsa Party in the D.C. Metro area. 2010 will be the 11th annual party. Look for announcements this August.

**SalsaMetro.Com** advertises weekday events in its SalsaMetro Weekly section, and covers Friday - Sunday events in its SalsaMetro Weekender section.

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email: [salsametro@aol.com](mailto:salsametro@aol.com)

# Eileen Torres

## D.C.'s Salsa Ambassador

By Nick Walker



Eileen Torres with a USPS award for presenting The Origins and Development of Salsa for Hispanic Heritage Month 2005.

The series of four stamps issued featured illustrations of Merengue, Salsa, Cha Cha Cha and Mambo.

Growing up in a Mexican-American family in Lorain, Ohio, Torres discovered salsa at an early age. According to Torres, Lorain had the highest concentration of Puerto Ricans—outside of the island or New York—and the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities lived in the same neighborhoods.

“During the 70s, the golden age of salsa, three businessmen formed Salsa Productions and brought top salsa artists each month,” said Torres. “I went to every dance even if I never heard of the artists. I concluded if these men were paying lots of money to bring the orchestras, they were probably worth experiencing. I was right and thus began my salsa education in earnest.”

When Torres moved to D.C. in 1987 to take a job with the National Council of La Raza, she found a small, but dedicated salsa community.

“The scene was terrific. Everyone went to Chelsea’s all dressed up. Half of the people didn’t know how to dance to salsa, so they just danced. But everyone had a great appreciation for the music,” said Torres.

Torres began hosting her own events at Zanzibar in the late 1990s. One of the first DJs to play there was DJ Bruno, who since has worked with Torres at numerous other clubs in the area.

“Eileen wants to help everyone. She’s very conscientious,” said Bruno. “She likes to showcase local talent and give everyone a chance to shine. She’s always doing stuff for children,

**M**any know Eileen Torres for running Thursday salsa nights at Zanzibar nightclub for nearly 10 years, but she also has been instrumental in building D.C.’s salsa community for much longer. Words like “promoter” fall short in describing her efforts to introduce newcomers to salsa and educate them about the dance and culture.



giving gifts to people, giving animals to people in other countries.”

“She’s an advocate for women because she’s doing something that’s not typical for women to do,” said Nancy Alonso, one of the hosts of *Latin Flavor* on 89.3 WPFW and a longtime friend of Torres. “So she tries to attract other women to be around her circle, like the annual night for Women in Salsa at Zanzibar. Lots of people come out and she invites local dance troupes for women to showcase their salsa dancing habits.”

One of these tributes featured the all-female Japanese salsa band *Son Reinas*, whose members sing in Spanish even though they don’t speak it. Another female performer brought to D.C. by Torres is DJ Cookie, whom she met in Philadelphia.

“The music was playing and I thought, that’s a good song, and then another, and another. I said, I need to congratulate the DJ, and I was surprised to see it was a woman, and she was of my generation. She knew music and knew how to read the crowd. Guys sometimes get surprised when females make an impact as this is still a male-dominated industry,” said Torres.

Torres also hosted a tribute to men in salsa, featuring all male dance teams.

“The funniest part was when the men started stripping,” said Torres. “Of course the stripping was not in the rehearsal, so it came as a total surprise. Unlike men who just smile when they see a stripper, the women went batty. They were jumping up and down and screaming. Security came up to see what was going on. It was hilarious, absolutely hilarious.”

Torres has brought some of the biggest names in salsa to play in D.C. over the years, including Johnny Polanco, La Orquesta Guayacán, Larry Harlow, Orquesta de la Luz, the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Congo Mulence, Willie Colón, Oscar D’León, Frankie Vasquez, Jimmy Bosch and many, many more, she said.

However, Torres’ personal favorite musician is her good friend Alfredo de la Fé. Torres met de la Fé in the 1970s, when his band *Típica ‘73* was on tour.

“I fell in love with his style,” said Torres. “I stopped dancing and just listened because I had never experienced anything like it.”

Years later, de la Fé was charged with drug trafficking and left the country. He spent 16 years in Colombia, and later lived in Italy. For awhile it seemed as though de la Fé would never be allowed to return to the U.S., but Torres had other plans.

“It’s not that I have a lot of power, which I don’t, but I have a lot of connections,” said Torres, who helped to get letters of support for de la Fé from community members, and arranged a meeting with the Brooklyn District Attorney. She and the attorney negotiated a deal in which de la Fé would perform a series of concerts over two years for a government anti-drug program,

in addition to paying a fine and performing community service.

“Eileen is a very special person,” said de la Fé. “She helped me out when I really needed it. I have a lot of gratitude for that. Not too many people do that for you, you know. Eileen does things without any ulterior motives. She does it out of her heart.”

“It was purely for selfish reasons,” said Torres, downplaying her own involvement. “I just wanted to see Alfredo again, and now I get to see him all the time.”

Torres also focuses her efforts on the history and culture of salsa. Jim Byers, another host on WPFW, has worked with Torres on salsa presentations at the Smithsonian and around D.C.



"I think our first interaction was when she asked me for some information about [1950s Mambo musician] Pérez Prado, and asked me to speak to a small group of people," said Byers. "She has really made a heroic effort to include both the history of music and dance, because most teachers, most promoters today really do not come at salsa from that standpoint. She has really made it a part of her agenda."

Looking back over the last two decades, Byers reflected on Torres' impact on the Washington area.

"There was a salsa scene here, but most people generally didn't know about it," said Byers. "What Eileen has done is really help craft that feeling. Now if you go to New York or to L.A., people do understand there's a salsa scene in Washington."

Though the scene is certainly bigger, Torres doesn't feel all of the changes are necessarily positive.

"It used to be people had a reverence for salsa and didn't go out dressed like they were going to wash their car," said Torres. "Men would escort women to and from the dance floor, not just walk away after the song ends. Dancers knew how to pace themselves. Nobody complained about a long song, unless you had someone who couldn't dance," Torres said, laughing at this last sentence.

"When the band isn't even done with the introduction, you've already seen everything some dancers know how to do. I'm more impressed with a man who will dance on time, and do the minimal turns rather than someone who will try to do a five-part turn combination, throw in some footwork that's off-time, and push and pull you around the whole song," said Torres.

Though she's going to keep promoting salsa for some time, Torres has plenty of other plans in the works. She intends to write a book on about a dozen of her salsa friends, exploring their lives and careers. Torres also wants to focus more on public speaking. In the past, she's spoken on issues such as success factors for Latino



Eileen Torres and Alfredo de la Fé, 2004

**Eileen does things  
without any  
ulterior motives.  
She does it  
out of her heart."**

— Alfredo de la Fé

women, the intersections between dance and race, gender and ethnicity, and has offered diversity training for corporations.

A self-described "student of spiritual enlightenment" for the past 35 years, Torres is contemplating a speaking tour tentatively titled "Why are we here on earth.... What if?" In the meantime, she's working on a salsa dance theater project featuring a lifetime tribute to Larry Harlow.

And in case that's not enough, she promises to re-establish another salsa night in D.C. similar to that at Zanzibar.

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## THE DJ'S Corner



Featuring

## DJ "EricB"



interviewed by Lorenzo Haire

**W**hen Eric Brouwer saunters into a room, he is not the typical image of a salsa DJ. He is 6'4" with long blonde hair worn Native American style, has a hard-to-place urban accent, and wears baggy clothes he describes as "ghetto fabulous." By day, Brouwer works for the Dutch Embassy, and by night he works on his music or spins at the hottest clubs around D.C.

**Q:** How long have you been a salsa DJ and where did you get your start?

**A:** I started listening to salsa in the mid 90s and after coming home from a trip to Venezuela I started collecting the music in 2001. After much persuasion from friends, I started deejaying in Holland in 2004 at a dance studio called Burnet.

**Q:** Is there a musical difference between the salsa scenes in Washington D.C. and Holland?

**A:** There is a little more diversity in the salsa music in Europe and Holland in particular. Europeans in general play more Cuban music—timba—and other sub-genres of salsa. Like here in D.C., Europeans play bachata and merengue, but they also will add in a splash of zouk [a French Caribbean rhythmic music], which is popular in Holland and throughout Europe.

**Q:** What are your influences in salsa music?

**A:** Early influences were artists like Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz, Joe Cuba, Palmieri brothers, Ray Barretto. As I began digging deeper, artist like Bobby Quesada, Eddie Lebron, Shorty Ramirez, and Willy Meléndez really made an impact.

**Q:** What advice would you give to someone wanting to become a salsa DJ?

**A:** Do your homework and research the origins of the music, the

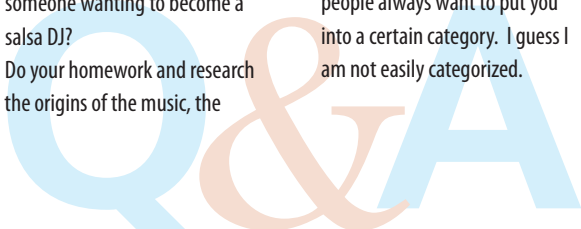
different rhythms, how the music evolved through time, the artists, etc. Build a solid collection of music and make sure you include music that might not be your preference.

**Q:** What is a common mistake DJs make?

**A:** I see this happen quite a lot--DJ's failing to read the crowd and not adjusting their choice of music nor to the level of the dancers present. Or sometimes they're not willing.

**Q:** Have people told you that you don't look like a salsa DJ?

**A:** I have had people tell me they thought I was a hip-hop DJ because of my baggy clothing. Some thought I was a rocker because of my long hair. I guess it's like with all things in life--it seems like people always want to put you into a certain category. I guess I am not easily categorized.



# "Say What?" Salseros weigh in



By Cathy Freeman

One of the more heated topics on the D.C. Salsa Meetup's message board was whether salsa "belongs" to Latinos. So, we asked several members of D.C.'s salsa community, Latinos and non-Latinos.

**Q: "Do you have to be Latino to really GET salsa?"**

**Antonio Williams** - No, most Latin people don't know how to dance salsa to begin with. As for salsa music, Latinos speak the language which helps them understand the songs, but the flavor and the beat can be understood by anyone.

**Ben Layno** - No, everybody has a talent and if you commit yourself to salsa dancing, then anyone can be good at it. I personally speak very little Spanish and can't translate the lyrics, but I love the melody and musicality of salsa. I feel it is an escape from the day-to-day routine stresses and a great way to meet people.

**Ivette Estrada** - Yes and no. No, because anyone can take lessons and learn salsa. Yes,

because there is a different connection for those who were actually raised around the music. I feel those who have been exposed to it their whole life have a

deeper appreciation for the music and its history. You just somehow feel more connected to its roots. I realize that most instructors in the D.C. area are not Latino and they are all great. They have mastered the dance, but salsa is more than a dance. It is a culture and lifestyle that is rooted in you.

**Patrizia Miramare** - No, as long as you have rhythm and you enjoy the music, you don't need to be Latin to get it. I don't need to know Spanish to understand salsa music as the melody is so beautiful that no interpretation is needed.

**Ruth Mathangi** - No, I don't feel you have to be Latin to enjoy the music. I can relate to salsa because I grew up with a very eclectic taste in international music coming from India. Human emotions are the same no matter what language you speak. I do feel that if I spoke Spanish, I would understand the songs more. But you don't need to be Latin to speak Spanish and therefore you do not need to be Latin to get salsa.



Ben



Patrizia



Ivette



Antonio



Ruth

# Shimmies and Shines: Fusing Belly Dance and Salsa

By Hildi Pardo

Enter the Tenleytown Sahara Dance Studio in northwest Washington, D.C., and you will find a brightly lit, humid room, with veils draped from the ceiling, and women dressed in loose pants tapered at the ankles, scarves with coins tied around their hips, and their shirts folded up to expose their bellies. The women from the Raqs Caravan West student performance group travel the length of the room shimmying and turning, as the instructor reminds them, "Don't spot!"

The intermediate/advanced technique class has the women refining their shimmies, isolations, arm movements and finger cymbal playing. They break down the subtle yet intricate movements to match the music. "So that we are hitting the accent," the instructor emphasizes.

This is American Tribal Belly Dance, which Lynn LaMartina, 32, defines as a non-traditional fusion influenced by Middle Eastern belly dance combined with other forms, which can be danced to non-traditional music. "There is Nubian fusion, West African fusion," she explained, "so when I started combining the dance forms, my mind opened up, and I got the inspiration for fusion with salsa."

LaMartina lives in Baltimore and works for the Social Security Administration. She has danced since she was 4 years old. "I took tap, ballet and jazz lessons; all the dances one takes as a child." As an adult, she started with Lindy Hop and Swing, but soon was ready for something new.







In 2002 a friend invited her to a salsa rueda class and LaMartina started taking lessons with Piero González of Salsa Casino at Maryland. She moved on to other rueda groups: Dance in Time and RuedaUSA. In 2007 she joined SAOCO D.C. and continues to perform with the group. Dancing rueda led LaMartina to social salsa dancing and she started taking workshops with different salsa instructors, all with their particular perspectives. “Once a dance grabs me and I love it, I always strive to learn it well,” she said.

In 2003, LaMartina also discovered belly dance when a high school friend invited her to a performance. “Belly dance is one of the best expressions of female beauty—it is skillful and sensual,” she said. “It also takes a lot of training.” She joined Sahara Dance, which has over 600 students, including several D.C. salseras.

While social salsa dancing at the clubs, LaMartina felt subtle elements of belly dance creep into her styling, like shimmies and isolations. Others noticed too, and she started receiving comments like, “Your styling is so unique. . . how did you learn that?” This gave her the idea of fusing belly dance with salsa in a routine.

LaMartina wanted to choreograph a piece that combined the two dances she loves, but she knew she had to find just the right song. “The best type of music is something that is very percussive. Our bodies are like instruments. We are matching the hits, the dings, the accents in the music.”

“I put a lot of time into researching music that expressed both dance forms. The music has to inspire you because if you aren’t inspired, you’re not going to bring the stage presence, and express the joy of how the music makes you feel, makes you want to move,” she said. “From there it is a short jump from shimmies to shines.”

She picked Tito Puente’s *Hong Kong Mambo* and choreographed most of the routine. Jimmy Rivas, the choreographer for SAOCO D.C., also contributed. “While I was hitting musical accents through belly dance, Jimmy gave me some good, clean shines that hit the salsa accents.” She has performed the unique fusion twice at Zanzibar, once at The Barking Dog, and at Baltimore’s Latinofest. The performances have been enthusiastically received by the salsa audience.



Photo: Axel Persaud

LaMartina explains that belly dance requires moving several different muscles independently, which is what a belly dancer

strives for. "I'd really like people to know that belly dance can very much enhance styling for women, and really men, too. There is a lot of emphasis on isolation in salsa and there is no better way to learn this than through belly dance."

Next, LaMartina wants to create a group routine with some of her fellow dancers from SAOCO D.C. or Sahara Dance.

"Salsa and belly dance—to me they are both joyful," she said. "Both of these dances are for people of all ages, sizes, nationalities—it's not limited to any one group. You don't have to be Hispanic to learn salsa. You don't have to be thin to belly dance. It's for your personal expression and the joy you get from it."



***“Salsa” is not just a style of dance or music, it’s my passion and a way of life. It has personally touched my life in a positive way. It is through this dance that I’ve met wonderful people throughout the world and great relationships have been created.***

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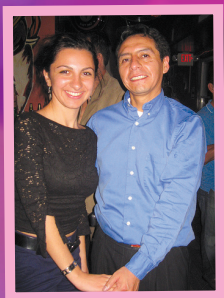


# be scene

## Lucky Bar



## Habana Village



## mr. mambo



## station. 9





# Epa! Catching Up with D.C.'s ClaveKazi in Portugal

By Kira Zalan





**A**round the corner from a steep, narrow alley paved with mosaic lime stone, across from a traditional Portuguese *pastelaria* filled with baked sweets, and surrounded by Lisbon's centuries-old pastel buildings, sits the EDSA Dance Academy. Enter the unassuming, faded green structure from the cobblestone street on a Friday night and you will find yourself in one of the building's six dance studios, in the middle of a salsa social.

With over a thousand students and 18 dance instructors from around the world, EDSA is the largest dance academy in Portugal and offers ballroom, flamenco and belly dance classes in addition to its Latin dance repertoire. It has also been home to two of D.C.'s salsa exports for the past eight months.

Shaka Brown, 32, and Luz Rodríguez, 29, of the Washington D.C.-based ClaveKazi Dance Company have worked as guest instructors here, teaching salsa On2, a recently-emerging style in Portugal.

"It's so different because with New York style salsa, there is more body isolation and position changing than what we dance," said Miguel Alhandra, 38, a student at EDSA.

Brown and Rodríguez are the only ones to offer such classes and in May, the two return to D.C., leaving behind an extremely dedicated fan base.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," said Ana Isa, 30, who took group lessons at the academy and private lessons from Rodríguez. "There are no On2 instructors here, and I'm not going back to learning regular salsa." Isa is looking for a way to set up classes with Rodríguez over the Internet.

"I think they'll be back," said Francisco Dionisio, a 56-year-old student. "Lisbon is the best place in the world to live because of the weather, the people and the food."

It was a year ago when Brown, ClaveKazi's founder, was teaching a typical two-day workshop in Lisbon and noticed the lack of On2 instructors and dancers. He proposed the idea of teaching for a semester to the Academy's owners. Shortly after came the invitation to be a guest instructor for three months; Brown immediately accepted. "There was nothing holding me in D.C.," he said. In September 2008, he and moved into a Lisbon apartment arranged for him by the Academy.



A month into his stay, the Academy had an opening for another dancer and Brown wanted a partner with the same style to help him teach. He tries to bring ClaveKazi members with him when he travels as much as possible, since they are familiar with his style of working and teaching, he said. "It also makes the experience better, having people to share it with," he added.

Brown instant messaged Rodríguez, a ClaveKazi dancer, "hey. . .so can you be here in a few weeks?"

"I was pretty floored," said Rodríguez. "At Shaka's going away party, I jokingly told him 'send for me.' I didn't realize that he'd take it seriously."

Rodríguez had just left a stressful job with a public charter school when the offer to move to Portugal popped up over Gchat. Rodríguez earned a double-



**"I dance for a living and I get to travel. I feel like I'm living a dream."**

bachelor's degree from Emory University in Sociology and Political Science and then worked in the non-profit sector for six years. She always loved dancing, she said, but never had the courage to do it full-time as a profession.

She bought a book called *Learn Portuguese in Seven Days* and got on a plane to Lisbon.

The opportunity to dance full-time has been a life-changing experience, she said. "I dance for a living and I get to travel. I feel like I'm living a dream." She said this time has been important for her to reassess her goals, and when she returns to D.C. she will pursue a career path that involves dance.

Brown, on the other hand, has been a professional dancer for nine years and has traveled to 23 countries

to perform and teach salsa. But this is the first time he lived and worked as a dance instructor overseas. Asked about his favorite place, he said, "I actually gain a deeper appreciation for the USA each time I go somewhere."

When Brown attended the private Landon School for boys in Bethesda through his junior year in high school, he watched the affluent kids go on trips to places like Spain and China. He was there only because of a scholarship, and his mom couldn't send him overseas.

"I always wanted to travel, see these places," Brown explained over a pitcher of sweetened sangria at Chimarrão restaurant in downtown Lisbon. In 1999, he earned a bachelor's degree in Computer Information Systems from Florida A&M University and soon found himself in "a basement," working as a government contractor.

"I figured out that I spent ten hours a day, including commute, on the job. If you sleep for only six hours,





"I always wanted to travel, see these places."

that leaves eight hours in the day to do everything else," he said. A month into his new IT gig he made the decision to quit and move to Brazil for half a year, where he taught a few salsa classes. Nine years and dozens of countries later, Brown has no plans to go back to the office.

It's not all glitz and glamour, he warns. The money is not regular, the gigs are not permanent, the hours are abnormal, and you spend a lot of time away from home. "I've missed events—weddings, birthdays," Brown explained. "I have nieces and nephews who I don't know." He has aspirations of being a police officer one day, but for now, this lifestyle suits him.

Before returning home, Brown and Rodríguez perform and teach in Holland, Germany and Japan. Neither is eager to leave Portugal, but both are optimistic about upcoming opportunities in D.C.

The Scene welcomes their return.





# Welcome to Habana Village

By Kira Zalan



**H**abana Village, a Cuban restaurant, is a long time staple of the diverse, funky neighborhood of D.C.'s Adams Morgan district. The red awning at 1834 Columbia Road unceremoniously displays the Spanish spelling for Cuba's capital city, Havana.

But walk inside, and you find a cozy earth-toned dining room with a 45-item menu, featuring Cuban specialties like *ropa vieja* and *arroz con pollo* and Fernanda Lopez behind the bar turning out mojitos with sugar cane stocks in high-ball glasses.

Follow the first set of stairs up, and you see on the wall a 10' x 8' black-and-white painting of Celia Cruz, the Cuban salsa sensation. Behind the tinted glass that blocks the DJ booth from the crowd is either Jim "El Duro" Steck or Alberto "Azucar" Machado, spinning every style of salsa music.

On a Saturday night, you can follow another staircase, a portrait gallery of salsa stars, to the third floor, where a band plays salsa classics to a typically crowded dance floor.

Habana Village originally opened at 2467 18th Street in Adams Morgan in 1992. Eduardo Barada, a Cuban immigrant, took over the second floor of a Salvadoran restaurant, El Tuzumal, which was not being used but had a dance floor, a bar, and a sound system. Barada's Habana Village became a popular after-hours bar for the burgeoning D.C. Latin community.

"You'd get there between 2:30 and 3:30 am and not leave until 8 in the morning," said Peter Luján, who grew up in the area. "Adams Morgan back then wasn't what it is now."

When the original location burned down on Thanksgiving night 1995, the Washington Post ran a story quoting an artistic administrator with the Washington Performing Arts Society, Cristina King, saying, "It's the end of an era." But it wasn't. Barada temporarily relocated Habana Village to a building on Columbia Road and then to its current and permanent location a few blocks away.

When Barada wanted out of the business, cousins Peter Luján and Percy Luján took over in November 1999.

"We wanted to make it more than just a dance place," said Luján, so they set out to create an environment that showcased Cuban culture as a whole—through food, art and music.

The new owners hired a sous chef from Gloria Estefan's Miami-based Cuban restaurant to transform the menu from Spanish to Cuban and commissioned several local Latino artists to cover the walls with lively murals that reflected the theme of Habana Village.

They also made some structural investments by opening the third floor, expanding the restrooms and changing plywood floors to Brazilian walnut. This summer, Habana Village will offer patio seating for sidewalk dining. Current plans are to make over the third floor into a lounge by adding booths, which will create more dance and dining space, Luján said.

"We really didn't want to make Habana Village into another trendy Adams Morgan place," said Luján. "We want to retain the authenticity and for people to feel really at home."

"This place has a unique flavor that you won't find anywhere else," said Luis Medina, who wears his signature Panama hat and has a pair of *clave* sticks tucked into his back pocket. "It reminds me of home because the feel is so Caribbean," he said, referring to his country of origin, the Dominican Republic. Medina is a regular on the dance floor at Habana Village.

In the early 1990s, when the restaurant was at its original 18th Street location, dance instructor Leon Harris taught salsa on Thursday nights. "Habana Village became the salsa landmark in D.C.," said Harris. "It started slow at the beginning, and eventually got more popular by word of mouth."

"This is the first place I learned to dance, in 1994," said Wendell Robinson, a veteran D.C. salsa organizer. He still comes because of the family environment and

unpretentiousness. "Habana Village has a loyal following and it has stood the test of time."

"I've seen all the other places go down, but Habana Village has this soul," agreed Natalia Andreyeva. "When I moved to D.C. seven years ago, people here were friendly and welcoming.

And this is still my favorite place," she said.

Alem "Al" Abate, who has been coming here for six years, said that the magnetism of Habana Village is rooted in its atmosphere and concept. He has traveled extensively—Europe, Africa, Australia—and visits salsa venues everywhere he goes. "This place would be hot anywhere," he said.

Of course, Habana Village has its detractors. The gripes are limited dance space, too much Cuban music, and the lack of advanced dancers. However, many of D.C.'s professional dancers got their start taking beginner lessons

at Habana Village.

"It's like a spawning ground for dancers," said Jim Steck, who has deejayed at the venue for almost a decade and seen the development of several salsa professionals.

"People don't take themselves too seriously here, so it's a great place for beginners."

Indeed, the Habana Village crowd is noticeably more diverse than many D.C. salsa venues. To each, the atmosphere at Habana Village has its own appeal—whether it's the food, the music, the mojitos or the dancing.

The resounding consensus of the patrons that regularly fill this joint to capacity is—it's the vibe.



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# BALTIMORE

# SIN MIEDO

By Nick Walker



Photo: Ruth Mathangi

**L**isten closely over the rush of the crowd and cars in Adams Morgan neighborhood on a Saturday night and you will hear the sounds of one of D.C.'s best-known Latin bands streaming from the open windows of 18th Street's Bossa Lounge.

Known for their vibrant blend of Afro-Cuban percussion and jazz, Sin Miedo (Spanish for "fearless") draws a crowd of college students, senior citizens and everyone in-between. As they play a salsa song, Bossa's cozy dance floor swells with people of varying dance skills, moving to Sin Miedo's infectious grooves.

"You can come here and hear music all week long, but no other band sounds like this one," said Daniel Cima, a long-time supporter of Sin Miedo seated on Bossa's outside patio, which borders the stage from the back. "To me, there's no band better than this, certainly not in this neighborhood."

The man behind Sin Miedo is French pianist and vocalist Didier Prossaird. He discovered Latin music as a

teenager, and then in the early 90s left France for a Caribbean vacation in Saint Barthélemy in the West Indies.

Prossaird enjoyed Saint Barth so much that his "vacation" ended up lasting three and a half years as he began performing with local bands on the island. Upon meeting members of Baltimore-based Mambo Combo, who were there on tour, Prossaird moved to the United States in the mid 90s to perform with them. In 1998, he left Mambo Combo to start Sin Miedo.

"Salsa is the same all over the world," Prossaird said.

"It used to be that people in France couldn't dance salsa, until about six or seven years ago. Now they have lessons and bands. It's really caught on over there."

Sin Miedo began playing Thursdays at the nearby Rumba Café, only a couple of blocks away from Bossa.

One member who has been in the band since the beginning is percussionist René Ibanez, who alternates between playing the congas, bongos, and timbales.

Ten years ago the band was just a quintet. More instruments were added over time, and now the full band includes ten members, many of whom were originally jazz musicians.

Prossaird draws inspiration from other pianists, including Rubén González of Buena Vista Social Club fame. He considers legendary Cuban pianist Chucho Valdés as his biggest influence.

"He's way out there, doing all this shit," Prossaird said. "It's crazy; the piano suffers."

Sin Miedo released their third album, "Estoy Enamorado," in March of this year. Most of the lyrics are written by songwriter Alexis Fleites and combined with musical arrangements by Prossaird and others in the band.

"The last album was more jazz, this is more salsa, which I'm happy about; it's more danceable," said bass player Steve Sachse, who joined the band in 2000.

In addition to composing music, Sin Miedo is known for improvisation. Wednesday nights at Bossa feature more jazz than salsa, and members will spontaneously break off into separate rhythms only to seamlessly come together moments later, drawing out songs to fifteen minutes or more.

"We've been playing so long, we all know each other," said Ibanez about the band. "We know what's going on, we use telepathy, we feel each other."

During a recent Saturday night show, a clarinetist from an Adams Morgan bar dropped in to play with Sin Miedo for awhile. A couple of hours later, a percussionist did the same.

"You know a band is good when people from other bands come in to jam with them," said Susanna Travies, who helped manage the Rumba Café with Daniel Cima when Sin Miedo was just getting started.

"The amazing thing about this band is that it's so multi-cultural," Travies added. You have this French guy playing not only salsa but rumba and all types of Cuban music and he really gets it. Then you have Steve who is American, René who is Cuban, a Venezuelan bongo player, and so on. Sin Miedo is very diverse."

"With Latin music, that's just how it is," added Alfredo Mojica, timbalero and vocalist. "It doesn't matter where you're from. If you feel it, you've got it."

Sin Miedo was voted Best Salsa Band two years in a row at the local Salsa Metro Awards. They also are known for their versatility, punctuating sets with mambo, cha cha cha, merengue, cumbia and much more.

"We play all kinds of music—Latin, Brazilian, reggae, Indian, African—just whatever, you know," said Prossaird.

"I am 100 percent Cuban, and my parents taught me to keep the tradition alive," said Ibanez. "So we do Afro-Cuban—son montuno and guaracha. We also do danzón, charanga, and we are one of the only bands that play ballads. No other band in the area does that. We keep it very real."

When asked for his favorite venue to play, Prossaird smiled and replied, "Carnegie Hall..."

"Just kidding. I'm always happy, wherever I'm playing."







## PATIENCE, PRACTICE AND THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

By Barbara Bernstein

A old joke goes as follows: A woman walking down a street in New York City stopped a passerby and asked, “Excuse me, but can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?” The gentleman answered, “Practice, practice, practice!”

A new book out by Malcolm Gladwell makes a startling proposition about how to explain exceptional talent. Gladwell describes a principle he calls “the 20,000 hour rule.” He says that to be very outstanding at some skill—like a top flight pro tennis player—requires 20,000 hours of practice.

That amounts to 20 hours a week for 20 years.

Whether you train to perform or just dance for fun, the same rules apply: you just cannot become highly skilled without lots of practice; and you cannot get a lot of practice without being comfortable making mistakes, picking yourself up and trying again. No matter how talented someone appears to be when they dance, they didn’t start out that way. They made mistakes and kept on trying.

Just as children learn to walk before they run, students of dance learn to do things slowly before accelerating. It is best to learn new material first to very slow music and once the move is in muscle memory, gradually kick up the pace.

Slow tempos are very “forgiving.” For example, if you have excess motion in your lead, you may be able to

slog through a move to a slow speed. But a faster speed requires greater cleanliness to get through the move, which can be done once you have practiced it enough to commit it to muscle memory.

It’s important to recognize that knowing something is really a matter of degree, rather than all or nothing. You don’t simply know or not know how to do a cross body lead, for example. You start out doing it hesitantly and with awkwardness, and the more you practice, the more confident and smooth the movement becomes.

Dancers may feel they already know a move, and understandably want to learn new moves rather than review what they know. But since learning is incremental, the more you do it, the better you’ll be—at faster tempos, with less thought, adding embellishments.

That smoothness and improved technique is what makes you feel good to dance with and look great on the floor.

---

*Barbara Bernstein is a Rueda de Casino Teacher and Director of DanceInTimeProductions.*

## She said "No" - so are you never asking her to dance again?

by Grace Badillo



This is one of the most sensitive subjects to discuss in the dance world. There are many reasons why she may have said "no." If she says "no" to you and "yes" to another gentleman a minute later, is this really inappropriate or "lame"?

### example #1:

She's tired or hurt. Women dancers tend to get hurt on average two to three times a night by a foot, elbow, rough lead, or because she is not being protected during the implementation of a dip or difficult move. When she said "no" to you she may have needed to rest or recover and one minute might have been all she needed. You were already dancing or nowhere to be found, so she said "yes" to someone else.

### example #2:

She doesn't like dancing with you or doesn't like your dance style. It may be hard to face but it's possible that the last time she danced with you, you were rough in your lead. Or did you get too seductive with your hold, or serious in your stare? A rough lead isn't fun but painful, and a seductive or serious partner can make her uncomfortable enough to not dance with you again.

### example #3:

Her answer has nothing to do with you; it's just a matter of circumstance. She may have promised the last dance to a friend who is about to leave the club. Or she may have promised the next dance to someone who asked her before you. This isn't lame, but courteous on her part.

### example #4:

Your manner of requesting the dance may have been wrong. Did you try to pull her from a deep conversation or just grunt a "come over here and dance" cave-man request? Did you grab her by the hand instead of just extending yours?

No woman likes this. Next time, try to be a gentleman and ask politely. If she says "no," respond that you understand with a smile attached. Don't try to change her mind.

Guys, there is no reason to be upset with a lady who said "no." On the contrary, try asking her if she needs water or napkins instead of being judgmental; she will certainly remember you the next time you ask her to dance.

Ladies, you have a responsibility in all of this, too. It is our job as aspiring great dancers to ask men to dance once in a while but especially if we've said "no" to them in the past. When declining, be sensitive and polite. "I will come get you before the night is over," is a nice I.O.U. But if you don't mean it, don't say it. Remember that it is a courtesy to dance with everyone, but you have no obligation to dance with anyone that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Finally, rolling your eyes is definitely a no-no. If you are an eye-roller, expect to have a pretty bad reputation wherever you tread. If you've gotten to the point where you think you are too good to dance with someone, you have lost the spirit of salsa/mambo.

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*Grace Badillo of Dancing with Grace will host the Salsa Etiquette column. If you would like your etiquette-related question or complaint addressed in print or on The Scene website, email to [grace@dancingwithgrace.com](mailto:grace@dancingwithgrace.com)*

# SAOCO D.C.

## The BIGGEST Rueda in Town

By Kira Zalan

Casino and rueda salsa are sometimes considered an underground scene in the Washington, D.C. area. But you wouldn't know it if you showed up to one of SAOCO D.C.'s classes, which regularly attract anywhere from 60 to 100 people on Fridays at The Salsa Room and Sundays at Chevy Chase Ballroom.

By far the largest rueda performance group with the largest amount of students in the area, SAOCO D.C., is celebrating the group's four-year anniversary this month.

The classes had a growth surge this past year, said Jennifer González, 37, who in addition to teaching and scheduling performances runs SAOCO's website, [www.saocodc.com](http://www.saocodc.com). She attributes the group's sudden popularity in part to the website, where you can find information on everything from class schedules, to interactive activities like "Where in the world. . .?" to a list of rueda moves ranging in difficulty from Beginner to Master. "I think you have to give people a reason to come back to the website," said González. And hundreds do.

Talk to any of the group's founding members, and they say they owe SAOCO's birth to the group's predecessor—Salsa Casino at Maryland (SCAM). Piero González, SCAM's director until the group disbanded in 2004, once explained that SCAM was inspired by "Miami-style" casino and rueda.



Ernesto Reyes and Jennifer Gonzalez

There is no official definition for the particular style, but it is distinct for its intricate turn patterns, disco-inspired 70s moves, and foot taps and arm segmentation that accent each beat in the music. When danced by a couple, the style is "casino." When danced within a group, typically in a circle formation with a "caller" directing the group's moves, the dance is called "rueda" or "rueda de casino."





Performance group



Sunday social



Intermediate rueda class

Ernesto Reyes, 32, who danced with SCAM for three years, started the current group with other former members just a few months after SCAM ended. He said the name—saoco, which is a sweet Cuban drink made from coconut and white rum—was perfect because of its Cuban sound. But, he admits that the group's dance style is Miami, rather than Cuban, a relic from SCAM. The D.C. in SAOCO D.C. stands for Distrito Casinero, or district of casino dancers in English.

**“They are quite serious and expect a lot. I like that.”**

**— Eriko Kobayashi**

Ronaldo Palacios, 44, who only had two lessons so far with SAOCO likes the professionalism of the instructors. “It’s always hard to learn something new so it takes a lot of patience and talent from the teachers to do what they do,” he said.

González conducts surveys to make sure the students are happy. The feedback is 95 percent positive, she said, with the complaints mainly about the huge class sizes.

But the crowd is manageable because the class is broken down into several *ruedas* (circles), ranging from the very beginner to advanced. At the Chevy Chase Ballroom on Sundays, that requires two dance rooms and four teachers, all skilled in what they do.

Eriko Kobayashi, 42, who has been coming to class for a year, said, “They are quite serious and expect a lot. I like that.”

Sarah Chaplin, who moved to D.C. from England five years ago, said, “They welcome you with open arms.”

A former performer with the group, Rodolfo “Compi” Caballeros, explained he recently moved on to mambo, but still comes to classes because it’s “like family.” Asked why he thinks SAOCO is so popular with the students, he said, “We are very welcoming to new people.”

At the end of one recent Sunday class and open dance session, Reyes invited the first-timers who stayed till the end of the social to the middle of the dance floor, alongside SAOCO’s performers and regular students.

“They’re welcoming them to the group,” explained González as the newbies were greeted with hugs and kisses.

“I remember what it was like to be a beginner,” she said looking at the batch of fresh recruits. “I love to see them learn and watch their confidence grow.”

# Workshops & Weekend Lessons

May 9th, Body Movement, Salsa Footwork, Salsa & Bachata Workshop  
May 26th, Grace and Hugo's Last Tuesday Lessons at the Promenade (7-9pm)

July 11th Special Saturday Salsa Group Lessons from 1-4 \$10 each  
1-2pm Salsa Beginners-Beginner III Footwork & Styling  
2-3pm Salsa Intermediate Technique Spinning  
3-4pm Salsa Intermediate Combinations w/ spins

July 12th Workshop: Spinning Technique & Ladies Cross Body Lead Workshop

August 15th Special Saturday Salsa Group Lessons from 1-4 \$10 each  
1-2pm Salsa Body Movement, All Levels  
2-3pm Salsa Intermediate Technique Footwork  
3-4pm Salsa Intermediate Combinations

Sept 5th, Ladies Styling Workshop

To sign up for any of these workshops go to [www.dancingwithgrace.com/store](http://www.dancingwithgrace.com/store) & click on workshops. For Group Lessons just come ready to dance!

**Location:** The Promenade Dance Sport Facility  
2605 Lord Baltimore Drive  
Baltimore, MD 21244

Grace will also be in town for private lessons on June 23rd, 24th & 25th. To book her please email [grace@dancingwithgrace.com](mailto:grace@dancingwithgrace.com).

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# Dancing With Grace 2009 Event Schedule

May 16th - The Scene Magazine Next Edition  
White Party at The Salsa Room

May 25th - DWG Memorial Day Salsa Beach Party  
at Sandy Point State Park! Private Pavilion!

May 30th - Salsa & Rueda Night w/Salsa Lesson, Buffet  
& lessons with Dance In Time Productions

Jun 19-21st - DWG Shoe, Clothing, & Jewelry Sale  
at the DC Salsa Congress! ([CapitalCongress.com](http://CapitalCongress.com))

Jun 25-28th - Grace Teaches at the Philadelphia Salsa Congress  
& has Shoe/Clothing Sale! ([PhilaSalsaCongress.com](http://PhilaSalsaCongress.com))

Oct 30-Nov 1st - Philadelphia SALSAFEST 2009 ([PhiladelphiaSalsaFest.com](http://PhiladelphiaSalsaFest.com))

Nov 21st - Grace & Hugo Teach & Judge at The Belly Dance Nationals in Baltimore  
([BellyDanceNationals.com](http://BellyDanceNationals.com))

Dancing With Grace thanks you for being part of our lives for these last 10 years.  
May God Bless Each & Every One of You! Sincerely, Grace and Hugo

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# D.C. Salsa Congress

## Celebrates 5 Years

By Kira Zalan

**F**rom June 19 to 21, salsaeros from around the United States and abroad will descend on the nation's capital for the 5th Annual International Washington D.C. Salsa Congress at the Hilton Crystal City in Arlington. Organized each year by the ClaveKazi Dance Company, the three-day event features local and visiting instructors, performers, dancers and DJs.

Only 15 years ago, there were two main salsa congresses—Puerto Rico and Los Angeles. Since then, the phenomenon spread with salsa congresses around the world in places like Switzerland, India, Guatemala and Israel.

Salsa dancing has been around as long as the music. However, the high level of organization and promotion that currently exists is more recent, largely due to the Internet.

In 1994, Edie "The Salsa FREAK" Lewis and Ben Rappaport started Salsaweb, a centralized portal for salsa information around the country including referrals and listings. According to Shaka Brown, host of the D.C. Salsa Congress, this was the beginning of the salsa dance industry.

When he started learning salsa in 1999, the website was the ultimate go-to for information. "I devoured it," said Brown.

Ricardo Loaiza, a D.C. salsaero and promoter, organized the first SalsaWeb Convention in D.C. in 1999. The second annual convention was held the following year in Toronto, Canada, and was emceed by David Meléndez, a New York salsaero. In 2001, Meléndez,

along with Albert Torres and Luis Zegarra, founded the New York Salsa Congress in the Catskills. Brown taught and performed at the 3rd Annual New York Salsa Congress in 2003, and two years later Meléndez approached Brown to collaborate and organize a congress in D.C.

"The first year was insane," said Brown. "Each year it's a bit more organized."

And also a bit bigger, said Irene Holtzman, a Clavekazi member who schedules performances and workshops for the congress.

Attendance is small compared to the well-established Los Angeles Salsa Congress, which brings in 7,000 to 8,000 attendees and offers over 200 performances. But Brown said he likes the intimate feel of the D.C. congress.

The organizers don't have official numbers, but believe last year the main room reached the 750 person capacity and expect more participants this year.

"Eighty percent of the hotel rooms are booked and we have 47 confirmed artists, with a list of performers waiting for others to drop out," said Holtzman in an April interview with *The Scene*.

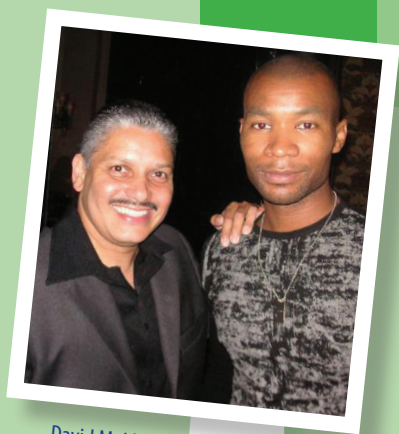


The congress offers 40 workshops over two days, with a wide variety of dances, including hip-hop, rueda and possibly kizomba, a slow and sensual African dance Brown brought back from Portugal. Every hour there is a workshop for every level of dancer, said Holtzman.

Along with the main open-dance floor, an International Room will be open for the second year in a row. Salseros may venture there for a break and find a congress DJ on rotation playing bachata, reggaeton, merengue, latin house, soca (calypso), or anything the crowd is responding to, said Holtzman.

Aspiring and professional dancers also have the opportunity to take a workshop series entitled "The Industry - Developing Entertainment Professionals." "What began as a lunchtime discussion at the 2007 Congress turned into three hours of questions, answers and suggestions," Brown explained. Seeing the demand, he established the development seminar for this year's congress. The workshops, led by industry professionals, will offer advice on creating an image, negotiating contracts, providing DJ services, marketing and booking events, as well as stage do's and don'ts.

In addition to planning the congress, the organizers



*David Meléndez and Shaka Brown*

also have been raising funds for a good cause.

David Meléndez, founder of the New York Salsa Congress who collaborated with Brown to organize the first two D.C. congresses, passed away from cancer in February 2007. One of Meléndez's legacies is the Starlite Dance Studio in the Bronx, which provides a positive dance environment for inner-city kids. The D.C. Salsa Congress organizers learned that Starlite needs mirrors and are fundraising the \$3,000 needed through the congress. ClaveKazi is collecting direct donations through the congress website, [www.capitolcongress.com](http://www.capitolcongress.com), and also contributing portions of the pass sales to the Starlite Mirror Fund.

The fundraiser is perfectly consistent with the scheduled lineup. This year, four major children's salsa groups are performing, and a family-friendly workshop day is scheduled for kids from 9 to 18 years old.

"They bring so much energy to the congress," said Holtzman. "The older we get, the more we see that the future is in the 18 and under crowd."

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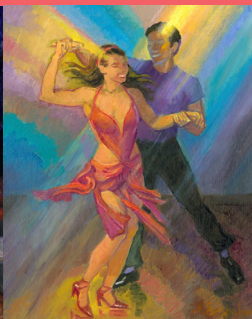
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## WEDNESDAY

### LATIN FUSION NIGHT

DINING 5:30PM-11:00PM  
SALSA CLASS 7:30PM-9PM  
DJ TUK 9:00PM-1:30AM

## THURSDAY

### WORLD SALSA NIGHT

DINING 5:30PM-11:00PM  
SALSA CLASS 7:30PM-9PM  
DJ AZUCAR 9:00PM-2:00AM

## FRIDAY

### BATTLE OF THE DJS

DINING 5:30PM-1:00AM  
SALSA CLASS 7:30PM-9PM  
DJ DURO/AZUCAR  
9:00PM-2:00AM

## SATURDAY

### 3LEVEL GROVE

DINING 5:30PM-1:00AM  
SALSA CLASS 7:30PM-9PM  
DJ AZUCAR 9:00PM-2:00AM  
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## SUNDAY

### FAMILY NIGHT

BRUNCH 11:00AM-4PM  
DINNER 4:00PM-9:00PM  
FAMILY SALSA CLASS 5:30PM-6PM  
ADULT SALSA CLASS 6:30PM-7:30PM  
DJ DUPREE 7:30PM-12:00AM

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