



An interview
By: Maritza Bodine

The Tango

(Sally, the character as a struggling tango student is so real, that it's easy for us to identify with it. Although we had never before met Sally Potter, it was like meeting an old friend. She's a lovely lady, deep, sensitive and void of any affectation).

MB: Your expertise is in film. How does it feel to be a tango dancer, especially in a film?

SP: Well...it's not quite like anything else in my experience, although I've always loved to dance and I firmly believe that inside every single individual on earth there is a dancer...that we dance before we're born....we dance in the womb to the rhythm of the heartbeat of our mother, the very basic art form in every society is dance, you see that in all the tribal societies, but gradually people in their lifetime come often to think themselves as clumsy, I don't know what happens to people to make them lose confidence in the natural ability to dance that everybody has.

MB: How long did you study tango for the film?

SP: Before I made the film, I was studying very intensively for two years or more. That is, every day, and while I was making the film, many hours a day. In the first year I went to Buenos Aires five times. I took three, four lessons a day, in the milongas all night long dancing with anybody that would dance with me, and it escalated. Of course, once I decided to make the film, I knew I had to go into serious training.

MB: Tell me, how does the film industry in England react to a woman making films?

SP: When I first started I had no role models. It may be a little lonelier when you do that. But now, there're many women making films. We're still in the tiny minority, but still there are quite a lot.

MB: That's good. I'm happy to hear that. You have such lovely features, beautiful bone structure, why did the Director decide not to take advantage of those features to glamorize Sally?

SP: I thought of that; but I thought it'd be more interesting that people would see somebody that, in a way, was naked, vulnerable, not disguising herself. It's not about vanity, on the contrary, it's somebody taking risks and exposing herself, I felt that people would identify more with the character, and say "Ah, that's me," instead of "No, I could never be like that." Also because I was putting myself on the film it was important that I put myself in a harsh light.

MB: Tell me about the ending. It seems that it came too unexpectedly.

SP: Actually I wrote a different ending for it before. And this happens to me all the time. Endings are very difficult in films, because you want to give people something to go away with that gives them an energy to go back into their lives, you don't want to close the door on a story, on the other hand you don't want to leave it too open so it's too vague, so I tried to find a balance, that they would feel empowered and inspired.

MB: There was a comment from Europe in the Internet a while back praising the premise of the film, a woman with a younger man. Is that common in Europe?

SP: I don't know....we didn't know each other's ages until after we shot the film. We never talked about it. It's not really relevant.

From the outside people might notice, maybe, but from the inside it doesn't matter. One of the great things about the tango is that people of all ages have something to give to each other, it's a beautiful exchange.

Besides, it's relaxing for a younger man, anyway, to be with an older woman...she's

not making too many demands, she knows where she's going she can take charge, she's tender, she understands him, she's comfortable, she's sensitive.

MB: Do you think men like it when a woman takes charge?

SP: Yeah! Not in the dancing much like to lead it, but in life...yeah! maybe they don't want to admit it, that's another thing. Because they don't want to appear weak. But it's not weak. For a man to relax and surrender to the lead of a woman in life, is a sign of his own confidence and strength. It's only the insecure men who feels that they have to appear to be the boss all the time. Pablo is a mixture. But as an actor working with the director, he was terrific. We love each other in so many different kinds of ways. It's not just one level.

MB: That is beautiful. After that, there's nothing left to say for now.... and that's a wrap!



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go Lesson

(Pablo Veron and Sally Potter were in Los Angeles promoting their new film. We had planned to get together for a few minutes to discuss the making of the movie. Instead, the minutes flew into hours... how could it have been any other way. The topic is exciting and the protagonists delightful. It was good to see Pablo again not rushing from class to class, but relaxed, calm, sensitive and sure of who he is. Very candid and open willing to share with us a part of his life that has been very rewarding.)

MB: Where is home for you these days?

PV: Paris, I've been living there for six years now.

MB: How does it feel to be a "movie star" now?

PV: You say I'm a movie star? No, not yet, besides that it was not my objective. I've never been stuck in only one genre, I'm a dancer, I've been in theatre, I have a lot of stage experience, I've always liked the movies, besides, it's something I always hoped for. I didn't look for it Maybe instinctively I always knew it would happen. I hope the film will open the road for other musicals, there are no musicals made these days.

MB: How do you go about learning your lines in a language that is foreign to you?

PV: Well, I understand the basic structure of English, I don't quite have a handle on it because I don't live in a place where I'm forced to use it. But I understood the feeling, the meaning of my lines, besides, I had some lessons for them, especially in diction.

MB: Tell me about that scene where you tap-dance on the fireplace?

PV: There was no trick, no deeper area in the back. I really only had that very tiny space. And did you like that scene in the kitchen?

MB: Yeah, that was great! How long did it take you to rehearse it?

PV: Maybe a week, I changed it many times. Besides, I had problems, because I would rehearse, and the neighbors would complain.

MB: What do you mean the neighbors? Weren't you in a set, in a studio?

PV: No, no. It was a real house, it became our set. But no, it was not in a studio. It was complicated.

MB: The film is supposed to be "semi-biographical." What part was not real.

PV: The film oscillates continually, between reality and fiction. For instance, that scene in the kitchen, is true. One time I invited her to come to my house for dinner, and I started to play around with the lettuce, to have fun with tap dancing. Later, since she is the director who looks at things in a certain way, she worked it in. In film you have to take reality and make it larger, stronger, make it fiction. You have to recreate it. After all that's what movies are all about. It's not a documentary. Because reality, by itself, is of no interest. You live it, that's it.

MB: You're quite a talent as a dancer! How would you define talent? Are you born with it, or do you develop it?

PV: It's the predisposition a person has been born with to do something. The person recognizes this need... he has to do it. Since I was a little kid I knew I'd be a dancer. I liked sports and other things too, but I knew I'd be a dancer. But for your talent to be visible to the outside world, you have to work on it. I think that many people have



talent, but because of different things that happen in life, they have to do something else, and then, society takes you through the same road that everybody else travels like sheep. To develop your artistic talent you have to have the courage, the guts to do it, because it's not easy. The road is not designed for you by society. Nobody comes to you and tells you, "you have talent." You have to do it yourself.

MB: So, if a person wants to be a great tango dancer, and he was not born with talent.....?

PV: First you have to be a good observer, look at all the different styles, listen to all those who have something good to say, don't believe anyone who tells you "this is what tango is,"...this is the true tango." Don't trust anybody who knocks other people down, there are some guys who think they know it all, that they are the ultimate authority in tango and say "this" is the truth. The truth is that there are many different realities. Each dancer has his own way of dancing. Tango is precisely the





*Pablo Veron and Maritza Bodine,
Editor, La Voz del Tango*

kind of dance that was created by generations, and hundreds of thousands of dancers. Therefore, there is no ultimate truth. It's something very personal. No one can say that "this is the true way of doing it."

The one who's always defending the tango, does so because he's insecure, he's not sure of himself, he's not able to recognize the variety and the richness that is so much part of tango.

MB: Who had the greatest influence in your development as a tango dancer?

PV: Miguel Balmaceda and Antonio Todaro.

MB: That Libertango scene, was a powerful one! How long did you have to rehearse it?

PV: Well, we rehearsed it for three weeks and it took two days to film. Each one of the three guys, choreographed his own part, then I choreographed the whole thing together. It's a novelty. And yes, that image is very powerful. When people watch it, they feel the erotic power of that dance.

MB: Is it hard to tell when someone approaches you for the human being that you are, versus what you represent as a personality?

PV: You can't tell in an instant. In any event it's the same thing, for instance, what I am as an artist and what I am as a man, is the same thing. It's a unit. They are not two separate things. Generally people are going to contact you because of the image you have. Then, it is up to you to get people to know you beyond the image. Something very interesting takes place. It always happens that people have a

preconceived idea about you. But what happens is, people see what they want to see. It is difficult to find someone who's open to see who you are. Generally, they easily put an image on you, and that's it. They see what they want to see. They don't see the reality. The communication goes in an illusory basis. They put you in a role.

MB: So, what is the reality anyway?

PV: Your identity is on so many levels.

Ideologically, spiritual, your feelings.

What can I tell you about my feelings. I'm a person in search of myself, I want to be in agreement with myself, to question life, I try to be happy, I try to be in good terms with life, to be respectful, to live in such a way that I don't have to regret what I do.

I gamble with everything I do, with my feelings, my thoughts, everything. I try to be coherent, and by that I mean, not to say one thing and do another, and sometimes that is not well accepted by people. I also try to protect myself, preserve my feelings, to get to know people, and to be open to



life. I have the spirit of adventure, I like very much to travel. I am very much of ...a recluse, you know, solitary. Very. That's why I can travel.

MB: What attracts you the most in a woman?

PV: Besides beauty, what seduces me... in a woman.... it's intelligence... intelligence is ageless I like women with more experience... they're more peaceful... more settled. Those women who rely only on their beauty, disappoint me somewhat... because, beauty is more beautiful when they're not aware of it. When they start to manipulate, what's going on because

they're either beautiful, or they think they are beautiful, then you have to walk away.

MB: Intelligence, huh? Isn't that a little bit unusual? Don't men like to control women?

PV: I don't want to control them. I want to love them. I am sure enough of myself that I don't need to assert myself constantly. I am who I am.

MB: And who is that?

PV: As I said, I try to be at peace with myself to live the good things in life, to be transparent, to be good.

In the film, in a way, I show who I am. On the other hand it's only one aspect of me, that was exaggerated, because it's the role of that guy.

MB: Would you give us some tips for our male readers?

PV: Don't be a conformist. Don't accept only one version of tango. I listened to many, I studied with many, I kept only a little. What I liked, what fit my body.

To do tango, you have to practice. You don't do tango by talking. Some people talk and talk about tango. Tango is about being sensitive ... and about a union with a woman, you have to be sensitive to her. There are ways... technique... how to be precise... how to be able to flow... dance is synonymous with fluidity, with pleasure. It's not a struggle... it's not tension... it's pleasure... to be whole, in one piece connected with your partner. Then is when things happen. If you're tense, you're blocked.

There are some of us who, I think have done a good job about the past and present and have interesting things to say.

Especially you should be able to tell who are those interested only in the commercialization of tango, that the only thing they do is to be the parasites in the market. Don't trust those who always talk bad about others. Those who talk bad about others, are not sure of themselves, they don't know how who they, themselves, are. Unfortunately there are a lot of people in tango who have become parasites in the



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