

# A hop, skip and jump away by Geny Caloisi

Photographs courtesy of LHAIF



If you enjoy combining your holiday in the sun with some fabulous dancing, then put Buenos Aires in your diary for January 2011 to take part in the Lindy Hop Argentina International Festival (LHAIF). Now in its fourth edition, this year's LHAIF welcomed over 100 people from Argentina and neighbouring countries – and I had the good fortune to go to this festival for the second consecutive year.

The lindy hop community in South America is still small compared with Europe's crowd, but as Calle Johansson, a Swedish teacher and guitarist who lives in the US, points out: "The dancing quality is excellent." He expands: "I came to the first LHAIF and I'm planning to keep coming because I love the energy of this place and the lindy community here is great."

The teaching talent included, from the US: Giselle Anguizola, Peter BetBasoo, Elliott Donnelley

and Skye Humphries, and Swedes Calle Johansson and Catrine Ljunggren. The festival was organised over four days, starting on a Thursday with a demo from the teachers, a flash class and a levelling session. The latter was done for the first time at the festival and involved the dancers being organised into three groups.

The dividing issue was whether the dancers could satisfactorily do the basic swing-outs and triple-steps. The result was a small level one and a huge level two, which were, in the end, merged. Level three was for the experts and there was also a total beginners' group. Last year, the lessons included more solo jazz moves, balboa and some tango. This year, instead, the emphasis was more on Charleston and choreographies. There was also an interesting lesson on musicality and one featuring some blues moves.

Buenos Aires in January is very hot and everybody at the

festival shed several pounds, smiling as they did so. The marathon days were Saturday and Sunday, with lessons starting at 2pm and going on until 8.30pm. The highlights were in the evenings when parties were held in the smart neighbourhood of Recoleta. In typical Latin spirit, gatherings started late at night from around 11pm and finished with people going out for breakfast at 6am. The theme for Friday's party was the 1920s and 1930s, with the traditional Jack and Jill and "Strictly Lindy" first-round competitions.

Saturday was the gala night with the Creole Jazz Band playing live. Improvised demonstrations with acrobatics and synchronised group dancing made jaws drop and observing dancers eager to learn more. Some cool blues gave everybody a chance to catch their breath. Sunday's final finished with a bang, with most people pre-booking for next year. Visit [www.lhaif.com.ar](http://www.lhaif.com.ar)



Top left and above, dancers at the LHAIF