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Long After Midnight At The Niño Bien: A Yanqui's Missteps In Argentina



Synopsis

After moving to Argentina on a whim, Brian Winter, a young American reporter, embarks on a crusade to learn that devilishly difficult dance that demands both discipline and passion: the tango. While he dances the night away in the milongas with the fiery denizens of Buenos Aires, the country around them collapses, gripped by inflation, street riots, and revolution. In a book that is part travelogue and part history, the author evokes his immersion in a dark underworld. He visits old dance salons, brothels, and shacks on the dusty Pampa, searching for the tango's shady origins in the hope that understanding may help him dance better. Along the way, he discovers that the tango, with its tales of jealousy, melodrama, and lost glory, may hold the secret to the country that is inexplicably disintegrating before his eyes.

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Customer Reviews

When Winter, a 22-year-old college graduate from Texas, suddenly found himself in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2000 with no job and about \$2,000 of savings, he never thought the importance of the tango, a century-old dance, would reshape his life as a man and as a writer of this insightful, comic memoir. He falls under the influence of the regulars of Niño Bien, a ramshackle milonga, a club where the tango is danced amid laughter, flirting and the raucous music of the bandoneón and the guitar. In his colorful, energetic descriptions of characters like Luis, the club owner, and El Tigre, a sailor turned tango instructor, Winter connects the dots between the social and political history of Argentina and tango music, chronicling the faithful bond between the pair. One element of the

travelogue that captures interest is the strict code governing tango society, as El Tigre advises the author: The first thing you have to know [is] that in the tango, the man controls everything. Along with a hit-and-miss flirtation, Warner learns about the passion, lust and romantic nature of the tango that seduced a country. Winter, now an editor at USA Today, provides readers with an outrageously funny tale of dance steps and travel. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Entertaining, charming, insightful and outrageous ... "Long After Midnight at the Nino Bien" is a book you will not be able to put down. It is a deft blend of history, memoir and unabashed love for a country and the dance that epitomizes it. Winter's narrative is intoxicating and nothing less than a look into the very soul of Argentina."--"Tucson Citizen," April 17, 2008

Pretty poor, snide account of tango dancing in Buenos Aires.

From start to finish, I couldn't put this book down. Winter is an excellent writer with a very unique voice and a great sense of humor that made me literally laugh out loud on several occasions. He is a brilliant storyteller and does a great job of weaving together his own personal experience exploring tango and culture with snapshots of Argentine tango history. His tales can at times appear to be so fanciful, stereotyped and simplistic that the reader may wonder if he is embellishing for dramatic effect. Despite this, the book is an enjoyable read. Readers who have great knowledge of Buenos Aires or have travelled there may become frustrated by his characterizations. However, the book is still valuable in seeing how an outsider attempted to delve past the stereotypes into an understanding of the tango and Argentine culture.

I couldn't put this book down. I'm a new Argentine tango dancer and it's given me a good historical context of tango's history. Brian puts a personal spin on it which breathes life into this book.

I read this book as part of an Argentina reading binge in preparation for my vacation. It helped me to develop a wonderful feel for the people, the history, and the country. The sections of historical background were easy to read without over simplifying and the author's experiences were fun and well-told if a little juvenile (but since he was a 20-something when he wrote it I suppose it is to be expected). Overall, I really enjoyed the book and I'll pass it on to my husband who will certainly relate to the youthful testosterone and alcohol binges in a foreign country.

Brian writes a novel in an easy to read, flowing style. The book is well researched. The information is presented as part of the context of an exciting story. The period covered is 2000 to 2004 in Argentina during the financial crisis. This is recounted first hand. What separates this book about tango in Buenos Aires from the rest is its entertainment value as a novel. The way in which the author gives depth to the meaning of tango is not by lecturing, but by allowing us to witness the views and actions of the various protagonists.

Outstanding review of the history of Argentina folded into the author's residency in that nation. He captures the character of the tango and how it relates to the unfortunate decline of a great nation. The colorful individuals befriended by Mr. Winter are more than cardboard cutouts but individuals with unique lives and the role they play for him at the Nino Bien. A surprisingly informative book.

This book makes Argentina come alive with real people and lively dialogue. I've read a lot about Argentina's social, political and economic crises, but the country never really came together for me until I read this book. Argentina, like the tango, is a sad thought you can dance to. Of course, it's a foreigner's perspective, but a fresh one from a young man who jumped into the whirl of Argentine life without preconceptions and writes about it with a refreshing honesty and lack of pretense.

In preparation for a trip to Buenos Aires I read this novel to give me an introduction to the culture of the tango. It did not disappoint! When we got to BA we had a tango lesson with a famous tango dancing couple and I felt I was back in the novel. I recommend this book whether or not you are going to be tangoing in Argentina. The character is very interesting and the book stands on its own.

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