

Last tango in Paris... but not Japan: Researchers discover the reasons behind a surprising trend

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When you think of the fiery tango, you would be forgiven for not immediately associating it with the Japanese, but the Argentine dance has grown rapidly in popularity in Japan and dozens of venues can be found in Tokyo alone.

The reasons behind this popularity can be attributed to the music's nostalgic sentiments which help the Japanese connect to their own history, according to researchers at Royal Holloway.

They found that the sadness, disappointment, tragedy and hope, which punctuate the [tango](#), resonate with people in [Japan](#) who have seen natural disasters and the tragedies of war in their own country.

Lead researcher Yuiko Asaba, PhD student from the Department of Music at Royal Holloway and tango musician, said: "The wave of immigrants who arrived in Argentina at the end of the 19th century, whose different cultures contributed to the evolution of tango, had a profound sense of longing for the places they left behind.

"This sentimentality is echoed in the feelings of my grandparents' generation in Japan, who had to completely rebuild their lives and land following the Second World War, and is also felt by more recent generations who have repeatedly endured the damage caused by earthquakes."

Since the first Argentine orchestra played in Japan in 1954, tango music started to grow in popularity, and is now performed widely in venues ranging from "Milonga", where people go to listen and dance, to expensive bars and world-class concert halls. Many successful tango musicians are now established in Japan's classical music scene.

"It was originally a dance only practised by the Japanese aristocracy when it was introduced from Paris in the early 20th century. But the tango is now very much part of the Japanese [national identity](#) and they have certainly adopted this exotic [music](#) as their own," Yuiko added.

Provided by Royal Holloway, University of London

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