

= Veloz and Yolanda =

Frank Veloz (1902 ? 1981) and Yolanda Casazza (1911 ? 1995) were a self @-@ taught American ballroom dance team , husband and wife , who became stars in the 1930s and 1940s . They were among the highest paid dance acts during this period . They performed on stage in productions such as Hot @-@ Cha ! , which ran for 119 shows on Broadway in 1932 . They also appeared in popular films such as Under the Pampas Moon (1935) , The Pride of the Yankees (1942) , Honeymoon Lodge (1943) , Brazil (1944) and The Thrill of Brazil (1946) , the latter of which is credited as being of major importance to the growth in popularity of Samba in America .

Veloz and Yolanda specialized in Latin ballroom dance styles , and opened their own chain of dance studios , where many middle @-@ class people learned the art of ballroom dancing . The studios closed down in the mid @-@ 1950s as new forms of dance became popular . Veloz and Yolanda did much to legitimize ballroom dance as a performance art and invented the " Cobra Tango " , a dance which interpreted a fight between a snake and a tiger . A full @-@ length ballet written by their son Guy Veloz , An American Tango , is based on their life story .

= = Early years = =

Frank Veloz was born in Washington , D.C. in 1902 to a Spanish father and a Dutch mother . Yolanda Bianca was born in 1911 . One of six sisters , Yolanda was from an Italian family . They met at a high school sorority dance in the Collegiate Club on 84th street , Manhattan ; Yolanda was sixteen and a student at Washington Irving High School while Veloz was an office boy . They danced in public dance contests , at first without success , but then won forty competitions , with prizes of US \$ 5 or US \$ 10 . In 1927 , they won the New York City and State Championship . After this they lost their amateur status and could no longer enter the competitions .

At first , Veloz and Yolanda struggled as a professional team . Many of their engagements turned into disasters . Veloz and Yolanda featured in the 1927 Broadway show Artists and Models , starring Ted Lewis and Jack Pearl . In 1929 they were in Pleasure Bound , another revue , with Aileen Stanley , Jack Pearl and Phil Baker . The New York Times critic Brooks Atkinson described Pleasure Bound as a " rough @-@ and @-@ ready " revue , but called the act of Frank Veloz and Yolanda Casazza a has @-@ to @-@ be @-@ seen " centrifugal dance spinning feminine heels in the air " . The couple married in 1929 and soon began arguing over each other 's mistakes , even considering divorce .

= = Star performers = =

In the 1930s , Veloz and Yolanda performed at first in small night clubs in New York , and later at expensive supper clubs . They appeared as specialty dancers in the Broadway musical comedy Hot @-@ Cha ! which ran for 119 performances at the Ziegfeld Theatre between 8 March and 18 June 1932 . They got their break when they were performing at the Everglades in Manhattan and were spotted by the Shubert brothers . This led to a highly successful career on the stage , in films and in supper clubs . Veloz and Yolanda choreographed the dance sequences in the film Rumba (Paramount , 1935) starring George Raft , and in some sequences Veloz doubled for Raft . The film Under the Pampas Moon (Fox , 1935) starring Warner Baxter featured tango . Rita Cansino , later to achieve fame as Rita Hayworth , performed an exuberant blend of flamenco and tango . The high point of the movie was a performance of a " cobra @-@ tango " by Veloz and Yolanda .

As the leading ballroom dance team in the United States , Veloz and Yolanda made US \$ 8 @,@ 500 in one week in Chicago in 1939 . They appeared on the cover of Life magazine on 30 October 1939 , which called them , " The greatest dance couple in America . " They were the first to give a recital of ballroom dance at Carnegie Hall They appeared at the Chicago Palmer House and then at the Cocoanut Grove in Hollywood . Veloz and Yolanda moved to Southern California in the 1940s . The Cocoanut Grove performances led to movie contracts , including Honeymoon Lodge , Cavalcade of Dance , The Pride of the Yankees , and The Thrill of Brazil . Samuel Goldwyn had

insisted on having a nightclub sequence with Veloz and Yolanda in *The Pride of the Yankees* to give some interest for women in what was otherwise a baseball movie . They performed in *Dancing with the Stars* at the Hollywood Bowl in 1942 , 1944 and 1946 .

= = Other activities = =

Both Frank and Yolanda were Christian Scientists . Yolanda always carried a knitted bag with her that held the Bible and *Science and Health* . She attended the same Christian Science church as Ginger Rogers for many years . Off stage , she was quiet and modest , and wore plain clothes , saying that " pretty " clothes were for her performances . Her stage dresses , all designed by Frank , were exquisite . Their first child , Frank Jr . , was born in 1940 . They had four children in all , called the " million dollar babies " because of the amount of income the couple lost while Yolanda was pregnant and then nursing a newborn . Two of these children died in their twenties .

In 1938 , Veloz and Yolanda published a dance manual , *Tango and Rumba : The Dances of Today and Tomorrow* (New York : Harper & Brothers) , co -@-@ written with Willard Hall . They hosted a TV show , *The Veloz and Yolanda Hour* , for several years . They opened a nightclub in Florida , *The Iris* . From the 1940s , the Veloz and Yolanda Dance Studios gave lessons in ballroom dancing for twelve hours each day , with the slogan " Walk In ? Dance Out " . The studios taught the Rhumba , Waltz , Fox Trot , Smooth Swing , Tango , Samba and Mambo . With each style , the student had to learn a series of steps or combinations . They would progress through the grades of " ruby " and " emerald " to the ultimate " diamond " level .

In 1949 , when Yolanda was pregnant , Frank Veloz danced with Jean Davi (born Jean Phelps) on the first Academy of Television Arts & Sciences awards . Jean was a Hollywood Lindy dancer who trained in ballroom dancing at one of the Veloz and Yolanda dance schools . After Yolanda retired , Jean became Frank 's partner in stage and TV performances .

When the fashion for ballroom dancing declined , replaced by new forms of dance , the Veloz and Yolanda schools began to close . The marriage broke up in the mid @-@ 1950s . In 1956 Yolanda sued Veloz for maintenance , accusing him of infidelity with Jean Davi , his dancing partner . The suit was dismissed the next year . In 1962 Veloz , now aged sixty , sued for divorce on the basis of extreme cruelty by his wife . Yolanda , aged fifty , was to have custody of their minor children . Their children were Nicholas , 21 ; Anthony , 18 ; Yolanda , 16 and Guy , 12 . Frank later married his former dance partner , Jean , twenty years his younger .

Frank Veloz died in 1981 . Yolanda Casazza died in 1995 . A full @-@ length ballet written by their son Guy Veloz , *An American Tango* , is based on their life story .

= = Style and influence = =

Veloz and Yolanda did much to legitimize ballroom dance as a performance art . Veloz and Yolanda were interested in the way that animals move and were said to have studied horses to learn change of stride and tempo . They created the " Cobra Tango " , a dance that interpreted a fight between a snake and a tiger . Veloz and Yolanda were known in particular for their interpretations of Latin Dance . With the Columbia film *The Thrill of Brazil* they made the Samba popular in America . Their signature dance was the " Yolanda Tango " , written by Frank , with which they ended their dance performances . William Teaford and Elizabeth Talbot @-@ Martin said this dance epitomized their style and performance . They wrote , " There was one lift that was truly spectacular ? Frank would pick up Yolanda , spin her with her head down , then throw her out where she landed on one knee in a low lunge , back leg extended . They never did any thing acrobatic , but this lift was spectacular . "

For Your Pleasure , a " dance vaudeville " featuring Veloz and Yolanda , opened at New York 's Mansfield Theater on 5 February 1943 and ran for eleven performances . They performed five dances , with Yolanda in a different gown for each . After seeing the show George Jean Nathan said , " ... it is my notion that this Veloz and Yolanda team is merely of the current average skill , not nearly so good as the De Marcos , that is , if it is Renée and not the present Sally who serves as

Tony 's partner , yet somewhat better than some of the couples publicized in the floor shows .
However The Billboard said of the show :

Smoothness is their trademark , and inventiveness of routines , excellent musical arrangements and impeccable grooming are the other attributes that make them outstanding . Avoiding aerial lifts , they depend for effectiveness on an effortless grace , the suggestion of the perfectly mated pair , and an apparent thoro [sic] enjoyment of their work .

= = Films = =

Veloz and Yolanda performed as dancers in :

1934 Many Happy Returns Specialty Dancers

1935 Under the Pampas Moon Café Dancers - The Cobra Tango (as Veloz and Yolanda)

1937 Champagne Waltz (as Veloz & Yolanda)

1942 The Pride of the Yankees (Goldwyn) Specialty Dancers

1943 Cavalcade of Dance (Warner Bros. Short)

1943 Honeymoon Lodge (Universal) Dancers

1944 Brazil Veloz and Yolanda

1946 The Thrill of Brazil (Columbia)