

Dancing With Your Salem Star: Tanie Hotan, MD

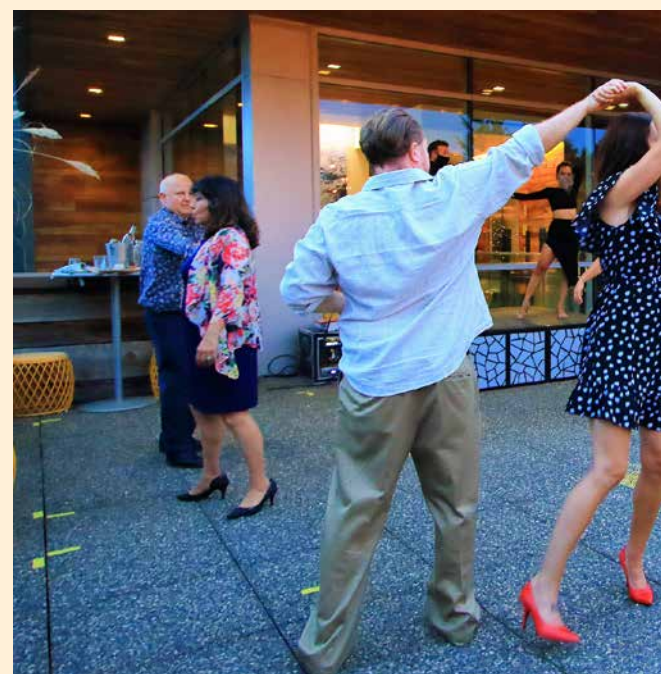
BY NANCY BOUTIN, MD

Aumsville family physician, Tanie Hotan, MD, didn't consider herself a ballroom dancer when Santiam Hospital asked her to represent them in the 2019 fundraiser, "Dancing with the Salem Stars." Yes, she had taught herself and her fellow cheerleaders hip hop back at Beaverton High School. Yes, she had danced her way through the stress of medical school and even taught hip hop in the Portland area during her residency. Now, on the far side of 40, with two mostly-grown children, the idea of dancing on stage, in heels, felt a little unnerving. When the organizers gave her "Disco" for style and Cher's "Believe" for music, Hotan decided she needed to go all out, to channel her inner Cher. After six practice sessions with her assigned partner, Chris, she walked on stage at the Elsinore theater with hair extensions, dramatic make-up, a red sequined mini dress, and white patent leather go-go boots.

After Hotan's performance, one of the judges commented, "When he puts you on his shoulder and you're able to lift your head up and stretch yourself out, I don't think people realize how difficult that is. I'm not supposed to do this," she held up a paddle, "but I'm giving you a '10.'"

Hotan walked off the stage with a Mirrorball trophy, a reawakened love of dance, and a new partner for future competitions, Mark Baker. She built a small dance studio in her basement and started taking lessons with a focus on Latin dance.

At 5 AM every morning, Hotan gets up for "a couple of hours of practice" before the workday starts. That



Up on the roof...



schedule might not be everyone's cup of tea, but for her, it's a moving meditation. Getting dressed, and putting her earbuds in while everyone else sleeps, elicits the anticipation of a Christmas morning and waiting for a good friend to visit. She steps onto the dance floor, finds her posture, and when the music starts, she says, "it sends me to a place of joy, connected to my spiritual being. I am in a beautiful, loving place of peace and body awareness, honoring the music and body."

The same mind/body/music/breath connection informs Hotan's visual art expression. As an abstract acrylic flow artist, she has a sense of what she wants to paint, but says that she tries to loosen her wrist and let the impulse flow. She strives to let the process be fluid and relinquish control, to listen to what it's trying to tell her. "It's usually much more beautiful than I could imagine, than what I could force." She says she takes the same approach to choreography.

Her knowledge of anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, and even applied physics helps Hotan execute

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Dancing at Cubanísimo

BY NANCY BOUTIN, MD



As the weather warms, and vaccine rates go up, it will be possible to dance outside with friends, neighbors, maybe even total strangers—with masks and appropriate distancing. Where to go?

One obvious venue is Cubanísimo Vineyards, which has been offering salsa dance nights for several years. It also happens to belong to MPCMS member and Salem neurosurgeon, Maurice Collada. Collada says, "Of course,

there's been a bit of a shut-down, but we're still open. We're looking forward to having people back on our patio and enjoying the music—and the wine."

Cubanísimo typically offers three days of music and dancing on Memorial Day weekend and continues to celebrate summer clear through the three-day Labor Day weekend. Not only do they offer Latin dancing, they schedule nights dedicated Zydeco and other types of Caribbean music. The vineyard has proven to be a draw for salsa aficionados all

along the I-5 corridor, so there are often some good examples to follow out on the dance floor.

Collada doesn't anticipate formal classes, but often has friendly experts on hand. He is open, however, to responding to the needs and requests of his guests.

Who knows? Maybe Tanie Hotan and Mark Baker could be persuaded to lead a class or two. In the meantime, Collada says that even couples with no ballroom experience enjoy an evening of dancing however the music moves them. And if they don't feel confident enough to start, another glass of wine should help a lot.



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the complex moves required in dances like the rumba, cha-cha, and samba. She sees “a beautiful melding of science and art” in the combination of her technical understanding and connection to the music. “I get an ‘aha’ moment every time, like I’m rediscovering it all.” Synonyms for that aha feeling include “inspiration, epiphany, and enlightenment,” which all seem in keeping with the private experience she describes.

The public experience of dance and dance competition suffered under

COVID-mandated social distancing, but Hotan and her partner found ways to safely continue dancing despite the pandemic. Instead of a ballroom filled with hundreds of dancers and a panel of judges, competitions moved online, with five or six professional-quality videos playing simultaneously on a single screen. Hotan and Baker have also found ways to teach outdoors, including on top of Salem’s Basil and Board, with taped areas separating couples who come for “Dancing Date Night on the Rooftop.”

They are talking with other safety-minded venues to expand opportunities for folks looking to overcome obstacles to dance.

Lauren Carlson, an Aumsville NP who attended two date nights at Basil and Board, says it was the first social foray out with her husband in months. She knew Hotan would follow safe practices, and, sure enough, every couple found hand sanitizer in their goodie bags when they reached their tables. “Everyone wore masks the whole time, except when the food came out.” Carlson admits her husband expressed a little skepticism at first, but it was so amazing for them to be out in the open together, around other people having fun, he relaxed and had a great time—he even liked picking up a few dance steps. Carlson says that when the restaurant announced the second Date Night, the couple bought tickets right away. “It was a no-brainer.”

Hotan’s own husband, family medicine doctor Scott Haden, MD, also expresses a little skepticism about dance, although he supports his wife’s involvement wholeheartedly. “About a year ago,” she says, “he asked me how often he had to go dancing to stay married to me. I told him ‘once a quarter.’” They used to go swing dancing together even before Hotan’s Salem Stars experience, but there are few opportunities during the rainy season. At home, she spends a few minutes, once a week or so, showing him Latin moves. Like many men in the US, the fluid hip action proves difficult, but she says Hadden is a very good sport.

Fortunately for Hotan and Hadden, they easily sorted out the dancing together/



Abstract acrylic flow.

staying married equation. Not only do they share two children, they share a medical practice. And Hotan believes the time and energy she puts into improving her dance, improves her medical care—it's the yin to her practice's yang, providing balance. "I love my medicine and the opportunity to help life, help the community, and there's such need right now. The love and creativity that comes through my art allows me to drive harder as a physician, to go the extra mile for my patients. I've always seen that when I have an artistic component to my life, I'm much more able to weather the storm."

The goal, Hotan says, is to become the best Latin dancer she can be. Winning or losing a competition is "like a little journal entry in my dance journey book. As long as I do my personal best and enjoy every moment, then I feel like I will have succeeded." 🇧🇷



Balancing act.

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