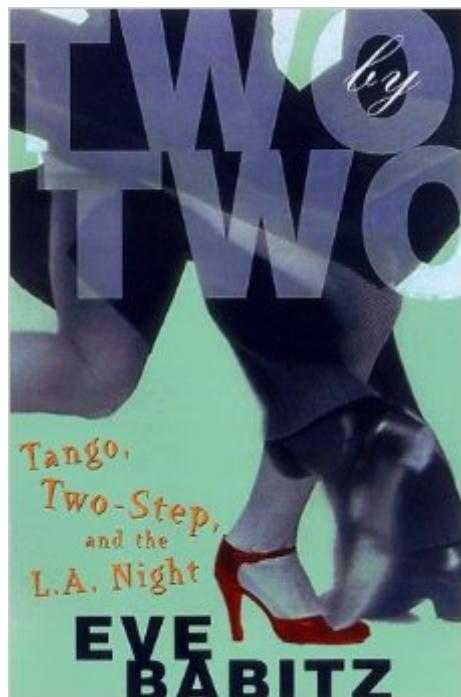


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# Two By Two: Tango, Two-Step, And The L.A. Night



## Synopsis

Forget Arthur Murray, or those dreaded dance classes your mother made you take. Two by Two is a fast-paced swirl through the dancing scene in L.A., where Leonardo DiCaprio has been known to swing at The Derby and Sandra Bullock salsa at El Floridita. Eve Babitz, a writer known for her hip, off-the-cuff, idiosyncratic style, spends two years of her life, ruins nine pairs of shoes, and goes through countless dance partners learning to appreciate and master all the hot dances from foxtrot and two-step to lindy, tango, salsa, and swing. Along the way she meets obsessed dancers and listens night after night as they pour out the secrets of their style -- who the best teachers are, where to find the perfect dancing shoes, and how to fall in love with your partner. Though the entire country is engaged in this dance revival, the L.A. scene is particularly alive, Babitz finds, because there have always been people in Los Angeles who insist on going out and being "in the scene," and plenty of music, charm, colorful groups of people, and adventure to lure them. She attributes the dance craze to the fact that singles bars died when people sobered up and realized just how abysmal that scene was. Drawn by the vivacious and electric dance scene, people now meet others who come for lessons, and immediately embrace the ambition to be as one with the music, the night, and someone, maybe you. Eve brings the flirtatious energy of dancing alive like no other writer. She describes salsa as "a dance of contradictions," "On the one hand, you want to 'be small,' as people who lead you will say if your steps are too big. But on the other hand, you want to stagger your competition by the immensity of your intensity. You want your own smoldering pride and divine fire to consume the room, and yet you want to hardly move." Two by Two is not a book that teaches you how to dance, but it will surely make you want to learn once you've read it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The book is about the dance scene in Los Angeles in the 90s. Babitz took dance lessons, went dancing, interviewed dancers and instructors, and made friends among them. There is commentary interspersed with dialog. The book reads easily and in the Epilogue, written some time after the main text because she was seriously burned and spent time recovering, contains a brief update on the dance scene (which rapidly changes, with clubs coming and going, fads coming and going, dancers coming and going, including some dying). The chapters are based on specific dances: fox-trot, two-step, tango, cajun and fais-dodo, ballroom, salsa, and both east coast and west coast swing. At first blush the book seems a break from her previous works. They were fiction (although pretty autobiographical) and based primarily in the 60s, with some tales from her parents generation back into the 30s, when Hollywood was Hollywood. There was a grace and an ambiance which she presents. And there were certain people who were graced and who helped make that ambiance. In many ways that period passed in the 70s, when she wrote to fiction pieces. There is a nostalgia about them. TWO BY TWO also harkens back to that time, to Fred and Ginger, to when there still were social graces, where flirting was an art form. The dance scene has elements of this and TWO BY TWO traces this out, but in a New Journalism fashion. And the book is a paen to dancing, because it is fun and good for you. I recommend this book

I became interested in Eve Babitz after reading the March 2014 Vanity Fair article about her youth. She sounded fascinating and I vaguely remember her as writing articles for the L.A. Times magazine or similar publications in the 80s. This was one of the only two books by her I could find. It was highly disappointing. Reads as if she transcribed her phone conversations with a friend. The overall effect is like listening to your aunt talk to a friend of hers about a bunch of their other friends doing something that you have no interest in. I can't imagine this being of interest to anyone who does not take dance lessons. The blurb tried to promote it as having "celebrity gossip," but aside from one line about Madonna taking tango lessons from Joe Shmoe or whatever, I didn't see any. Gave up after skimming 1/4 of the book. Big yawn!

I have purchased this book and thoroughly enjoyed it. I and my friend's have also been able to put it to good use. However, I saw this woman on Book TV C-SPAN2 recently and she is a babbling fool. I

say keep writing and less talking.

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