

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921 - 1992)

'TANGO BALLE' ARR. JOSÉ BRAGATO

Tempo de Tango

La Calle

Encuentro - Olvido - Lento

Cabaret

Soledad - Lento

Tango has been a fascination to European society since at least the beginning of the 20th century. It can most simply be defined as walking with a partner and music. A good Tango dancer enables one to see the music, not just to hear it.

Tango originated in the cafes of Buenos Aires and was seen as just one style of dance amongst many. It only came to be generally known and described as Tango around 1890.

Tango soon spread to Uruguay and then the Americas and started developing into a number of distinctive styles, most notably the Argentinean Tango, Ballroom Tango and the Finnish Tango.

The Argentinean Tango is distinctive, in that it is based on improvisation, which is structured around a number of 'set pieces'. It is characterised by an emphasis on the 2nd and 4th beats of the bar. This structural signature contrasts dramatically with its close neighbour, the 'Milonga' - which consists primarily of 'Habanera' rhythms - and the 'Vals', a more fluid Tango set in one in a bar.

It was Astor Piazzolla, a notable bandoneon player and composer, who developed the original style, structure and form of the Tango into what is now called 'Nuevo Tango'.

As a young man, Piazzolla soon developed a passion for the latest composing 'stars' - Stravinsky, Bartok and Ravel. He was advised by Rubinstein to study with the composer Alberto Ginastera and later, in 1953, Piazzolla continued his studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. It was she who advised Piazzolla to be true to his roots and pursue his passion for Tango.

Having always been influenced by Jazz and the music of Bach, both of which he encountered growing up in New York, Piazzolla soon started to introduce 'Baroque' features like *passacaglia* technique, harmonic sequences and counterpoint, into his own tango compositions. He is also credited with infusing the concept of Jazz improvisation and chromaticism into the already existing sound-world and structure of the traditional Tango.

Originally written for and performed with his Sextet, this composition is no exception. A faithful arrangement by Piazzolla's long time 'cellist José Bragato, it starts with a rugged 'tango feel' section, where lilting off-beat accents alternate with driven soloistic musical lines that sound almost improvisatory in nature.

'*La Calle*' or 'The Street' gives the musical impression of the hustle and bustle of street life, rather in the vein of Gershwin's 'An American in Paris', jazzy rhythms and big band outbursts.

'*Encuentro - Olvido*', 'Encounter and Oblivion', is a sensuous slow section, which highlights individual instruments in solos, accompanied by strumming strings.

'*Cabaret*' is a real feature of Piazzolla's use of counterpoint, where he pitches intricate rhythmic fragments against each other in a wild outburst of torrential notes that are subdued by '*Soledad*', 'Solitude'.

Here a stark opening gives way to a poignant meandering violin improvisation, that is both mournful but, like all the other sections, never loses its reference to the traditional tango sound world.