TANGO… The Perfect Vehicle

The dialogues and sociocultural circumstances informing the emergence and evolution of tango expressions in Paris since the late 1970s.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the various dialogues that have shaped the evolution of contemporary tango variants in Paris since the late 1970s. I focus primarily on the work of a number of Argentine composers who went into political exile in the late 1970s and who continue to live abroad. Drawing on the ideas of Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin (concepts of dialogic relationships and polyvocality), I explore the creative mechanisms that allowed these and other artists to engage with a multiplicity of seemingly irreconcilable idioms within the framing concept of tango in order to accommodate their own musical needs and inquietudes. In addition, based on fieldwork conducted in Basel, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Gerona, Paris, and Rotterdam, I examine the mechanism through which musicians (some experienced tango players with longstanding ties with the genre, others young performers who have only recently fully embraced tango) engage with these new forms in order to revisit, create or reconstruct a sense of personal or communal identity through their performances and compositions. I argue that these novel expressions are recognized as tango not because of their melodies, harmonies or rhythmic patterns, but because of the ways these features are "musicalized" by the performers. I also argue that it is due to both the musical heterogeneity that shaped early tango expressions in Argentina and the primacy of performance practices in shaping the genre's sound that contemporary artists have been able to approach tango as a vehicle capable of accommodating the new musical identities resulting from their socially diverse and diasporic realities.

To Alicia Sanguinetti

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of musical examples on the CD

CD - 1

Introduction
Tango, a short historical background

1. Music traditions that contributed to the birth of tango
Payada: **Donde No Paso la Ciencia**, performed by Gustavo Guichon. (00:00-00:55)
Milonga: **Unnamed**, performed by Carlos Gimenez. (00:56-01:43)
Waltz: **Nuves que pasan** (V. Brana), performed by el Trio los Nativos. (01:45-02:14)
Polka: **Polca de Zamora**, performed by Rene Marino Rivero. (02:16-03:03)
Habanera: **Se Fue Y No Vuelve Mas** (Ignacio Cervantes), performed by Hernán López-Nussa. (03:04-04:03)
Candombe: **Unnamed**, performed by Maestros del Candombe**.** (04:05-05:07)

2. Francisco Hargreaves - Piano: Estela Telermann
Bartolo (Traditional, 1880)

3. Ernesto Drangosch - Piano: Estela Telermann
Tres Tangos Criollos op. 13 (1908)
- **Don Pepe** (00:00-01-58)
- **Nicolasito** (02:02-04:14)
- **Pedrucho** (04:18-06:26)

4. Carlos López Buchardo - Piano: Estela Telermann
Parte el Tranguay (1905)

5. Early tangos
Región Campera (Arturo Bernstein) - Quinteto Criollo "El Alemán" (1913) (00:00 - 01:08)
El Pollito (Francisco Canaro) - Quinteto Criollo Atlanta (1916) (01:09 - 02:20)
9 De Julio (José Luis Padua) - Orquesta Roberto Firpo (1916) (02:24 - 03:51)
La Cumparsita (Gerardo Matos Rodríguez) - Orquesta Típica Alonso-Minotto (1917) (03:53 - 05:20)

6. La Guardia Vieja
El Africano (Eduardo Pereyra) - Orquesta Típica Canaro (1919)

7. La Guardia Nueva
Una droga (Juan Carlos Cobián) - Juan Carlos Cobián y su Orquesta Típica (1923)

8. La Guardia Nueva
Todo corazón (Julio De Caro/José Maria Ruffet) - El sexteto de Julio De Caro (1924)

9. Alfredo Gobbi y su Orquesta (1911)
Don Juan/Mozos guapos (Ernesto Ponzio/Alfredo Gobbi)

10. Carlos Gardel and José Ricardo (1917)
Mi Noche Triste/Lita (Samuel Castriota/Pascual Contursi)

11. Juan D'Arienzo y Su Orquesta Típica (1939)
Felicia (Enrique Saborido/Carlos Pacheco)

12. The Golden Era
Toda mi vida (Aníbal Troilo/Pascual Contursi) - Orquesta Aníbal Troilo with Francisco Fiorentino (1941)

13. The Golden Era
Tristeza Marina (Jose Dames/Roberto Flores/Horacio Sanguinetti)
Carlos Di Sarli Y Su Orquesta Típica With Roberto Rufino (1943)

14. The Golden Era
Mala Pinta (Francisco De Caro/Julio De Caro) - Osvaldo Pugliese y su Orquesta (1944)

15. The "Vanguard"
Todo Corazon (Julio De Caro) - Astor Piazzolla y su Orquesta Típica (1948)

16. The "Vanguard"
Prepárense (Astor Piazzolla) - Astor Piazzolla, su Bandoneón y sus Cuerdas (1955)

17. Eduardo Rovira
Sónico (Eduardo Rovira) - Eduardo Rovira y su agrupación de tango moderno (1968)

18. Quinteto Real
Mal De Amores (Pedro Laurenz) (1964)

19. Sexteto Tango
La Bordona (Emilio Balcarce) (1968)

20. Astor Piazzolla y su conjunto electrónico
Amelitango (Astor Piazzolla) (1976)

Chapter 1
Lagrima

21. Lagrima
Ancestros (Farias Gómez/Beytelmann) (1976)

22. Lagrima
Influencia (Farias Gómez/Beytelmann) (1976)

Agents of change

23. Gustavo Beytelmann
Obertura de los gauchos judíos - Los Gauchos Judíos (1975)

24. Osvaldo Pugliese y su Orquesta
El Pensamiento (Jiménez/Martínez) (1969)

25. Generación Cero
De Todas Maneras (Rodolfo Mederos) (1977)

Their music alter *lagrima*

26. Tiempo Argentino
Tango Rojo (Beytelmann/Gabetta) (1978)

Chapter 2
Blinded by the city of lights - Porteños' fascination with Paris

27. Banda De La Guardia Republicana De Paris
El Sargento Cabral (José Campoamor)

The French capital and its local tango scene - 1920s to 1950s

28. Orquesta Típica Bianco-Bachicha
Bandoneón Arrabalero (Bachicha/Contursi) - (1931)

29. Orchestre Argentin Manuel Pizarro
Una noche en el Garrón (Pizarro) - 1924.

30. Orchestre Mario Melfi
Un Violín En La Noche (Bixio - Melfi) (1936)

CD - 2

Chapter 3
Artistic liberty

31. Juan José Mosalini
Tangueada (Juan José Mosalini) (1979)

A different kind of audience

32. Tiempo Argentino
Lejos (Beytelmann/Gabetta) (1978)

33. Tomas Gubitsch and Osvaldo Calo
Resistiendo a la tormenta (Tomas Gubitsch) (1980)

Chapter 4
Challenging expectations: Critical responses to Tiempo Argentino and its offshoots.

34. Tomas Gubitsch and Osvaldo Calo
Suite de los Puertos (Tomas Gubitsch) (1980)
Tango (00:00-06-09)
Milonga Lenta (06:17-10:34)
Milonga (10:45-17:03)

35. Horacio Salgán & Ubaldo de Lío
Boedo (Julio de Caro) (1976)

Challenging a different set of expectations: responses in their homeland.

36. BCM trío
El Choclo (Ángel Villoldo) (1982)

37. BCM trío
La Bordona (Balcarce) (1982)

Tango and the 'cultured' vs. the 'popular' conflict

38. El Sexteto Mayor
Canaro En Paris (Caldarella/Scarpino) (1984)

39. Leopoldo Federico/Osvaldo Berlingieri/Horacio Cabarcos
A Fuego Lento (Salgán) (1970)

40. Reinaldo Nichele y su agrupación de tango moderno
Baile de etiqueta (Nichele) (1965)

Beyond the sounds - after the status associated with Europe's concert music

41. Eduardo Rovira
Sónico (Rovira) (1968)

Chapter 5
Overview of tango's key characteristics

42. Orquesta Aníbal Troilo
Recuerdos de Bohemia (Troilo) (1946)

Form

43. Orquesta Aníbal Troilo
La Cumparsita (Gerardo Matos Rodríguez) (1943)

44. Ricardo Tanturri
La cumparsita (Gerardo Matos Rodriguez) (1940)

45. Sexteto Mayor
La Cumparsita (Gerardo Matos Rodríguez) (1984)

46. Osmar Maderna Y Su Orquesta Típica
La Cumparsita (Gerardo Matos Rodríguez) (1950)

47. Juan D'Arienzo y Su Orquesta Típica
La Cumparsita (Gerardo Matos Rodríguez) (1937)

48. Sexteto Julio De Caro
Mala Pinta (Julio De Caro - Francisco De Caro) (1928)

49. Juan Carlos Cobian
Los Dopados (1922) - The composition was later given the title "*Los Mareados*"

Melody

50. Aida Cuevas
Por una cabeza (Gardel/Le Pera - 1935) (2010)

51. Adrian Iaies
Sur (Gardel/Le Pera) (1935)

Meter and Rhythm

52. Osvaldo Pugliese y su Orquesta
La Mariposa (Jiménez/Martínez) (1985)

53. Elvino Vardaro with the Quinteto Los Virtuosos
Tierrita Querida (Julio De Caro) - (1936)

Phrasing/Articulation

54. Paulina Fain
Estudio 2 – Articulación Combinada – *La Flauta en el Tango*.

55. Osvaldo Pugliese y su Orquesta
Los Mareados (Juan Carlos Cobian) (1922)

Chapter 6
Tango *Nómade* and a 'Bakhtinian approach' to its analysis

56. The BCM trío
La Cumparsita (Gerardo Matos Rodríguez) (1982)

57. Tomas Gubitsch Quintet
Te acordás de mi (Gubitsh) (2006)

58. Tomas Gubitsch Quintet
De los hermanos (Gubitsh) (2006)

Heteroglossia

59. Rodolfo Mederos and Nicolas "Colacho" Brizuela
El Choclo (Ángel Villoldo) (ca. 1903)

"Ambiguous" interpretations and rhythmic anchorage

60. Andrea Marsili - Fleurs Noirs
11 Heures 25 (Marsili) (2007)

61. Gerardo Jerez Le Cam
Siete Esquinas (Le Cam) (2010)

Chapter 7
I did not want to play tango… it was what came to my fingers!

62. Luis Naón
Helplessnes Tango (Luis Naón) (1987)

Introduction

In her children's book, *Mushroom in the Rain*, Mirra Ginsburg tells the tale of a series of animals taking shelter from the rain under a tiny little mushroom. The first to crawl under the mushroom was an ant. Soon after came a wet butterfly that asked the ant if it could also take cover under the mushroom. Then came a drenched mouse, a dripping sparrow, and lastly, a rain-soaked rabbit, each of them begging their fellow animals for a spot under the mushroom. How could the ant let the others in when there was barely room enough for her to sit under the mushroom we inevitably wonder. As the rain comes down and down, however, all the animals somehow manage to squeeze together and share the tiny shelter. By book's end, when the sun finally comes out, the ant discovers the magical secret that allowed the tiny mushroom she first discovered to offer shelter to her long list of increasingly bulky friends; mushrooms, we all learn, grow in the rain.

I first learned about the mushroom at the centre of this lively tale while reading the opening section of Mark Slobin's *Fiddler on the Move*: *Exploring the Klezmer World* (2000). In the monograph, recast as an ontological metaphor, the image of Ginsburg's magic mushroom is used to portray the highly diverse array of musical activities that in the last decades have flourished under the rubric *klezmer*.[1] Klezmer, Slobin writes, "is a modern musical mushroom that seems to have magical powers which are not discussed by Ginsburg's childhood model but are well-known to hip adults" (Slobin 2000, 3).

Numerous times I have considered similar metaphors in my dealings with tango, a practice defined not by one but three main expressions (i.e., dance, music, poetry) exhibiting various degrees of stylistic subdivision within them. In fact, I frequently end up relying on the image of an object whose physiognomy resembles that of Slobin's mushroom, an umbrella, to suggest that tango is a practice that includes many different elements. There is a fundamental difference, however. Unlike Ginsburg's mushroom, umbrellas do not grow in the rain; they will reach the end of the storm having the same size they did when the downpour started. It is a simple difference, but one that has

[1] According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "[j]ust as the basic experience of humans' spatial orientations give raise to orientational metaphors, so our experience with physical objects (especially our bodies) provide that basis for an extraordinarily wide variety of ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 25).

considerable implications when it comes to the metaphorical distance the referenced elements can travel. Only a limited number of elements can be grouped under the lifeless umbrella. From a metaphorical perspective, the umbrella suggests an area of cultural practice unable to accommodate new individuals or expressions. No such constraints exist under the expandable canopy of the mushroom, something that makes the metaphor of the mushroom a particularly apt one when dealing with tango, especially if we take into consideration what has been taking place in most recent times.

Over the course of the last three decades, tango has shown an impetuous resurgence with a renewed popularity that has forced the canopy of the tango mushroom to reach far beyond the borders of its native homeland (i.e., Argentina and Uruguay). The musical results of this expanded context of activity have set the stage for an unprecedented period marked by collaborations, experimentations, and musical crisscrossings of various kinds. This dissertation examines the dialogues that have informed the evolution of some of these novel tango expressions in one particular locale, Paris. My decision to concentrate on this specific centre of tango activity was initially motivated by my interest in the work of a number of Argentine musicians that, for reasons that will be examined throughout this work, relocated in the French capital during the late 1970s and early 1980s. My original involvement with these and other, more recent, tango-related expressions emerging from Paris led to a series of questions regarding the particularities of these new approaches, the musical dialogues and sociocultural realities that shaped them, and the value these novel conceptualizations had for composers, performers, and audiences, in and out of the contexts of their production. These broad concerns directed the research that culminated in this dissertation.

Objectives

This dissertation focuses on the tangos of a number of Argentine exiles that have made Paris and other French cities their home since the late 1970s. The use of the plural—as in tangos—is not gratuitous. Given the wide range of music expressions that keep emerging from under the expanding canopy of the mushroom of tango, the singular form seems misrepresentative today. This work has three main objectives. First, it elaborates on the processes involved in both the conceptualization and production of the reterritorialized forms of tango in Paris. The focus is on a number of artists whose work has followed Argentinean models but has not been stifled by the weight of these as unalterable traditional canons. The analysis undertaken here aims to improve our understanding of

the processes that have allowed composers to navigate the historical boundaries of tango in order to accommodate their own musical needs and inquietudes. What are these elements and how are they articulated in order to create a novel musical experience that we recognize as tango, regardless of the musics involved in the dialogue and context?

My second objective is to understand the values given to these musics by musicians and audience members in and out the sociocultural context that informed their emergence in Europe. This point is intrinsically but not uniquely related to complex issues of identity. As pointed out by Timothy Rice, "the relationship between music and identity is one of the most common themes around which ethnomusicologist organize their work" (Rice 2010, 319). This project is not focused solely on the examination of this particular relationship, however, as I will show, issues relating to identity have clearly influenced the emergence and evolution of these new tangos. Through interviews and participant observation, I examine the complex mechanism through which musicians—some Argentine expatriates, some French, some experienced tango players with longstanding ties with the genre, others young performers who have only recently fully embraced tango—engage with these musics in order to revisit, create or reconstruct a sense of personal, social, or communal identity through their performances and compositions.[2]

Thirdly, this dissertation looks at a number of issues associated with the recent institutionalization of tango pedagogies in Europe and Argentina. As a tango performer, I find the

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[2] Scholars have often organized their examination of the relationship between music and identity among individuals that, either from choice or compulsion, live outside their native country around the notion of diaspora (Bohlman 1989, 1998; Davis 2004; Diethrich 2004; Feldman 2005; Jackson 2000; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2002; Kubik 1994; Lipsitz 1994; Manuel 1997, 2000; Monson 2000; Pacini Hernandez 1998; Myers 1998; Slobin 1994, 2000, 2003; Ramnarine 2007; Radano 2003; Radano and Bohlman 2000; Reyes 1999; Sapoznik 1997; Shelemay 1998, 2006; Slobin 1994, 2003; Sugarman 1997; Svigals 2002; Turino and Lee 2004; Um 2000, 2005; Wang 2001; West-Durán 2004; Wong 2004.) While prevalent in the social sciences since the 1970s, diaspora did not make it to the ethnomusicologist's theoretical toolbox until the 1990s. Back then, "as the academic atmosphere drifted towards a new discourse centered on identity, diaspora crept into usage" (Slobin 2003, 285). Music, noted Slobin in his seminal Music in Diaspora: The View from Euro-America, offer researchers "a richness of methodological possibilities and points of view," offering new insights into the diasporic experience (Slobin 1994, 243). In the decades following Slobin's article, the notion of diaspora has expanded to include issues pertaining to dispersion, exile, ethnicity, nationalism, transnationalism, postcolonialism, globalization, race and racism, essentialism, and hybridity among many others (Monson 2000). This situation triggered numerous debates over the limits and theoretical, cultural, and historical resonances of the term and led some scholars to caution "against the uncritical, unreflexibe application of the term…to any and all contexts of global displacement and movement" (Braziel and Mannur 2003, 3). Notwithstanding, the notion of diaspora has provided music scholars a relevant and increasingly insightful theoretical lens. As Su Zheng noted, "diaspora is not just a revived old term denoting a state of geocultural being for groups of dispersed people, but a new analytical category with which we take part in current discourses on cultural politics, and a new empowering consciousness for many people who are struggling in their everyday lives to live with, claim, and belong to multiple cultural identities" (Zheng 2010, 28). While the idea of diapora, especially as approached by Slobin, offered valuable insights and paths of inquiry throughout my research, I chose to frame the discussion around the notion of exile.

mechanism employed in the transmission of the performance practices particular to tango an incredibly interesting yet highly understudied topic. Beyond my personal interest in the teaching of tango, I approach tango pedagogies with the intention of better understanding the role they have been playing in the dissemination of the genre. In addition, through my conversations with the students and professors at the conservatory of the commune of Genevilliers and Rotterdam's World Music Academy, I was able to form a much more solid understanding of the reasons and particularities of the relationships that these individuals have established with tango.

This dissertation asks why we hear musics so evidently different as tango. It looks at different composers and works to show that it is fundamentally musicians' knowledge of tango's performance practices that allows artists to place listeners within the realm of tango. In addition, I argue that due in part to the heterogeneity of musical elements that have informed the emergence and evolution of tango (i.e., African rhythms and performance practices, western European tonal harmony and instrumental techniques, eastern European fiddle traditions, rhythms and textures from Argentine folklore), the genre is a particularly apt medium for this form of musical dialogues.

Based on the analysis of the work of a series of composers currently living in Paris, I propose that what allows us to experience a piece of music as tango is not to be found in the melodies, harmonies or rhythmic patterns used, but in the ways these features are "musicalized" by the performers. It is primarily the practical knowledge musicians have accumulated and shared over time what allows them to situate us, listeners, within the realm of tango.

More recently, the genre's aforementioned heterogeneity has allowed artists to accommodate new heterogeneities that reflect their current realities and needs. In short, it is in part due to its flexibility that tango has been able to accommodate so many varied understandings and expressions of Argentine identity. I also argue that it is due to the initial musical heterogeneity that shaped tango and the primacy performance practices carry in shaping the sound of the genre that tango has been able to accommodate in so seemingly unproblematic ways new heterogeneities that reflect the current realities of composers, arrangers, and musicians. This later point is intimately tied to the increasingly relevant role tango has played in the creation and performance of identities among Argentines living in and outside their homeland.

Literature review

The first work devoted to tango was published in Buenos Aires in 1926, Vicente Rossi's *Cosas de Negros* (roughly translated as Things Blacks do or Things of Blacks). Rossi's publication is not only the first book on tango per se but also the first volume looking at the influence that African-American traditions had on the emergence and evolution of early tango. In the years following the publication of *Cosas de Negros*, only a few books on tango were published — no more than twenty by 1966 (Aharonián 2007, 13).[3] The situation remained fundamentally unchanged throughout the 1970s. In fact, it is not until the 1980s, following the first signs of tango's international resurgence, that we see a marked increase in the number of publications devoted to the genre in Argentina. By and large, these works are non-scholarly examinations approaching tango from predominantly historical or sociological perspectives (Assunção 1984; Barreiro 1986; Cadícamo 1983; Eichelbaum 1985; Ferrer 1980; Gobello 1980; Matamoro 1982; Penón 1987; Taylor 1987). Tango has also been studied from a musicological standpoint, but as Gilbert Chase noted in 1958, "within the literature – much of it literary, pictorial, or evocative in the *costumbrista* manner – books that deal with the musical substance of the tango are scarce" (Chase 1958, 348). Interestingly, the first musicological work on tango, published in 1936, appeared quite early in the history of the literature devoted to the genre. Not surprisingly, the author was Carlos Vega, Argentina's most eminent musicologist. His work was presented as part of his seminal *Danzas y canciones argentinas*. Vega had planned to expand on these initial efforts and produce an entire volume devoted to tango, *Los origenes del tango argentino*. Unfortunately, his 1966 death prevented him from finishing the monograph. After Vega's passing, Uruguayan musicologists Lauro Ayestarán studied the manuscripts left by his Argentine colleague and offered to complete the work. It was not until 2007, however, that the draft and notes Vega left were finally compiled and published by another Uruguayan musicologist friend of Vega, Coriún Aharonián.

A conspicuous gap in the output of musicological texts looking at tango followed Vega's 1936 publication. In fact, it would take more than four decades for the next significant contribution to appear. In 1980, an investigative project launched by Argentina's *Instituto Nacional de Musicologia*

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[3] "Los libros sobre tango no pasaban entonces de una veintena." (All translations from Spanish and French are mine. I have tried to be as direct as possible when translating. In some instances, however, the expressions used by writers or interviewees resist direct translation. In those cases, I have taken some interpretative liberties in order to maintain the meaning of the translation as close as possible to what it was originally intended. In all cases, the translated excerpts appear in their original language in a footnote.)

culminated with the publication of the first volume of the *Antología del Tango Rioplatense* (referred to hereon as *Antología*). The *Antología* presents a meticulous examination of the numerous processes that led to the emergence of tango as an independent form (circa 1900), its early evolution, and following systematization (1910s). Unfortunately, the lack of ongoing funding has prevented the publication of a planned second volume centred on the emergence of more recent tango expressions. Also in the 1980s, the *Instituto Nacional de Musicologia* began publishing the proceedings of its annual meetings (*Actas de las Jornadas Argentinas de Musicología),* thus providing a way to disseminate the work of numerous Argentine scholars working with tango.

In the two decades following tango's international resurgence of the 1980s a considerable growth in the amount of scholarly work, both local and international, has been devoted to tango. Some of them have revisited its history through various methodological lenses (Azzi 1991; Carretero 1995; Castro 1991; Collier et al. 1995; Febréz 2008; Horvath 2006; Lamas 1998; Martínez and Molinari 2012; Varela 2005). Others have focused on specific periods or figures (Azzi and Collier 2002; Buch 2012; Goertzen 1999; Fischerman and Gilbert 2009; Grillo 1998; Honorin 2011; Kleselman and García Falcó 2005; Kuri 2008; Lima Quintana 2009; Luker 2007; Pelinski 2009; Strega 2009), precise sociocultural concerns (Archetti 1999; Cámara de Landa 2008; Fraschini 2008; García Brunelli, Lencina, and Salton 2009, 2010; Garramuño 2007; Lavalle Cobo 2007; Sebastián 2006; Viladrich 2005, 2006), the genre's international histories (Alposta 1987; Portalet 1996; Zalko 2001; Weiland 1996), the influence of particular social groups (Cáceres 2008; Judkovski 1998; Thompson 2005) or tango's current situation in and outside Argentina (Luker 2007; Liska 2012; Pelinski 2000a, 2000b). Despite the growing interest in tango, following what seems to have become a trend within the genre's literature, most of these works have privileged socio-cultural concerns.

Some works approaching tango from a music analytical perspective have also been published. Some of these publications focus on the traditional canon (Novati et al. 1980; Kohan 1995, 1996; Mesa 2008; Peralta 2008); others look at more recent approaches (García Brunelli 2008; Marsili 2014; Salgán 2001, 2008); and some offer much needed insights into the interpretative particularities of the genre (Fain 2010; Gallo 2011; Posetti 2015).[4] The number of these analytical

[4] The method books of Paulina Fain (*La flauta en el tango*, 2010) and Ramiro Gallo (*El violín en el tango*, 2011) are part of a larger series called *Método de Tango* published in Spanish, English, French, and German by G. Ricordi & Co. in Munich. According to the information presented in the website of the publishing company (http://www.metododetango.com.ar), a piano book written by Hernan Possetti and a double bass one created by Ignacio Varchausky are "estimated to be launched in July 2014." (by November 2014 none of the latter had yet been made accessible to the public). Similar works for bandoneon and guitar are advertised as available by July 2015.

works remains small by comparison. In recent years we have also seen an increasing number of Ph.D. and DMA dissertations that have focused on tango (Cepitelli 2006; Chou 2010; Granados 2001; Dorsey 2005; Drago 2008; Luker 2009; Marsili 2012; Tsai 2005; Wymerszberg 2001).

This dissertation comes to fill a long-standing gap in the study of tango insofar as it contains a strong music-analytical component to address our understanding of contemporary, as well as previous, aesthetic conceptions of the genre. In addition, in contrast to most of the current tango-related musicological work, which circles around the figure of Astor Piazzolla (Fischerman and Gilbert 2009; García Brunelli 2008), throughout these pages I address a contemporary repertoire that has never undergone intensive scrutiny. I pay particular attention to the work of Juan José Mosalini, Gustavo Beytelmann, and Tomas Gubitsch, three Argentine composers/performers who have resided in Paris since the late 1970s.

Tango, a short historical background

The term tango, a derivation of the classical Ki-Kongo word *tanga* (Thompson 2005, 81),[5] was introduced to the port city of Buenos Aires by West African slaves and first used to name local reinterpretations of previously existing dance forms such as mazurkas, polkas, and habaneras during the second half of the nineteenth century (Lamas and Binda 1998, Novati et. al 1980, Oderigo 2008, Rossi 1926, Thompson 2005). In the words of historians Hugo Lamas and Enrique Binda, "[a]t the end of the last century there was a phenomenon called tango, which today nobody knows exactly what it was. As a dance it displayed a choreography whose steps shared with other dance rhythms" (Lamas and Binda 1998, 66).[6] It was not until the end of the century that tango began to be used in reference to a distinct local choreo-musical expression that developed from the increasingly vibrant

[5] According to Robert Farris Thompson, the Creole Buenos Aires idiom tango, meaning at the time "a dance; a drum; a place of dance" had its roots in the classical Ki-Kongo term *tanga*. In the West African language, *tanga* was used in reference to a "Fete, festival. Ceremony marking the end of a period of mourning." The following possibilities are also provided. *Tanga Dungulu*, "to walk showing off, to swagger;" *Tangala*, "to walk heavily and hesitantly, to stagger, to toddle, to trot, to walk with small steps, to walk like a chameleon, to march with the feet inward, to swagger. A large drum; a small drum;" *Tangala-Tangala*, "to walk like a crab;" *Tangalakana*, "to walk zigzag;" *Tangama*, "to take long steps; to leap or bound; to walk seriously or solemnly; to walk like a crab; to be thrown on one's back and be tightly held, as in wrestling;" *Tangana*, "to walk, to move like a chamaleon;" *Tanganana*, "to walk" (Thompson 2005, 81).

[6] "A fines del siglo pasado hubo un fenómeno llamado tango, el cual nadie sabe en la actualidad exactamente que era. Como danza tenia una coreografía cuyos pasos compartía con otros ritmos bailables."

interactions of an itinerant native population (i.e., *criollos*,[7] people of mixed European and African ancestry, and descendants of African slaves) with newly arrived European immigrants in the coastal regions of Buenos Aires and Montevideo.[8] In this increasingly heterogeneous context, through various processes of reinterpretations and hybridization, tango emerged as a "third space" (Bhabha 1994) for the negotiation of multiple struggles to structure racial, sexual, and class identities. Bhabha's idea of a 'third space' is intimately linked to his concept of hybridity. Hybrid identities open up fresh perspectives that possess the capacity to challenge the 'rigidity and an unchanging order' proposed by the colonialist discourse (Bhabha 1997: 44). The result is not an amalgamation of the voices involved but an in-between or 'third space' that enables "the articulation of subaltern agency" (1995: 329). The third space ensures that the meaning and symbols of culture have no "primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (1994: 55).

Little reliable information exists with regards to the processes that led to the emergence and early development of tango. First hand accounts were uncommon. According to musicologist Jorge Novati, protagonists and creators "were not concerned with documenting their cultural productions" (Novati 1980, II).[9] "Period documents do not show how the process evolved but how those interested in it perceived it; these individuals, although contemporaries to the examined events, were not actual participants" (Novati 1980, 27).[10] In most cases, the processes of documentation were left in the hands of "well-intentioned amateurs" that displayed "no academic rigor" (Azevedo 1972, 251). Furthermore, when surveying existent records it is necessary to take into account the negative attitudes that existed towards popular expressions at the time, something that is likely to have distorted numerous reports. An article published in April 1880 clearly shows the

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[7] The meaning of the term *criollo* can vary slightly depending on the region and context in which it is used. It is commonly used in general reference to a person born in a Hispano-American country or a product of that region. It also describes a descendant of European parents born in the Spanish colonies in America. According to the dictionary of The Royal Spanish Academy (*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*), the term can also be used in reference to Blacks born in these colonies. In Argentina, the term often points to people of mixed Native and European ancestry and this is how the term should be interpreted in the context of this work.

[8] For a long time, the term tango was used interchangeably with terms like habanera and *milonga* (an Argentine rural tradition that informed the emergence of tango). It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the term began to be used solely to refer to a local expression of distinct characteristics.

[9] "Pero cuando se trata de procesos populares, generalmente desdeñados por sus contemporáneos o registrados con una óptica distorsionante, la reconstrucción se complica al extremo. El pueblo, creador y protagonista, no se preocupa por documentar sus plasmaciones culturales."

[10] "Las fuentes documentales no muestran como fue el proceso, sino como lo vivieron los que de el se ocuparon, quienes si bien contemporáneos, no fueron protagonistas de los hechos."

extent to which class divisions, a term that at the time served as a euphemism for racial distinctions, tainted the description of popular practices.

> We see, for example, the differences that exist between the events common to the aristocratic dance halls and those that are the obliged "l'apanage" of the gathering of the lower classes…regulated under the pretext that they are necessary evils…In the great halls as in all the places where nature has, by education and good upbringing, veiled its real tendencies, such feelings born in the depths of the human being are not visible. (quoted in Lamas and Binda 1998: 51)[11]

The unreliable nature of most of what was written about the people and circumstances associated with tango at the time of its birth and early development is likely to have played a significant role in the creation and preservation of the mythology that has accompanied the genre since its consolidation. The story has been repeated ad infinitum in publications, films, and stage performances: an underworld of shady bordellos in the coastal regions of Buenos Aires and Montevideo where prostitutes were pimped by tough, knife-yielding, *compadritos*, and in the background, the early tango, starting to take shape in the feet of a couple of men dancing aggressively on a dimly lit street corner. Documents of the period confirm that tango was played in certain houses of ill repute and men known at the time to be compadritos were associated with tango.[12] Similar documents also suggest that the music was played in the living rooms of the burgeoning local middle class and also danced in their places of entertainment (Cibotti 2011, Corrado 2010, Lamas and Binda 1998, Sarlo 2007). These works confirm that by the turn of the nineteenth century tango was a well established choreo-musical form among Buenos Aires' growing middle class (Cibotti 2009, Lamas and Binda 1998, Sarlo 1999). In short, by 1910, the people of Buenos Aires were already used to the presence of tango in the city. The diminishing interest shown for tango in newspapers and magazines at the time was a sign of this "*acostumbramiento*" (roughly translated as getting used to or accustomed-ness; Novati and Cuello 1980, 32).

It is in this same period, however, when the increasingly popular dance and the social status of those who danced it began to be criticized: "although recognized as the dance in vogue, terms

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[11] "He aquí, por ejemplo, las diferencias que existen entre los hechos cuya presencia es común a los salones de baile, aristocráticos, y aquellos cuya presencia es «l'apanage» obligado de las tertulias de baja esfera…reglamentadas con el pretexto de que son males necesarios…En los grandes salones como en todas las partes en que la naturaleza ha sido velada en sus reales tendencias, por la ilustración y la buena crianza, no se ven esos sentimientos nacidos en lo mas profundo del ser."

[12] Compadritos were also known as thugs for hire at the service of well established politicians and public figures at the provincial and national level.

such as lewd and libertine begin to be used in reference to tango…at the time the dance halls of the elite continued closed to tango" (Novati and Cuello 1980, 32).[13] In 1913, Enrique Larreta, the Argentine ambassador to Paris, described the genre to an English reporter with the following words:

> In Buenos Aires, tango is a dance unique to the houses of ill repute and the bodegas of the worst kind; it's never danced in reputable halls or by distinguished people. In Argentine ears tango music awakens really unpleasant thoughts. (Larreta [1913], quoted in Matamoro 1969, 70)[14]

Larreta's version presents an inaccurate description of tango at the time, where its liaison with an underground world of ill repute and low lives is underlined with the intention to discredit the genre. Also in 1913, Leopoldo Lugones, one of Argentina's most famous tango detractors, added that:

> The prohibition of this indecency is not only honest and distinguished but also, to a large degree, patriotic. Argentine men should not serve as a label for this practice of marginals. It is not dignified nor true to do so. Tango is not a national dance, nor is the prostitution that conceives it. (Lugones [1913], quoted in Savigliano 1995, 140)

Lugones and Larreta were two of the loudest voices among a segment of the Argentine bourgeoisie that despised tango; their attack was aimed at a form they considered as nothing but a "pornographic spectacle" (idem.). It becomes rapidly evident, however, that it was not tango per se that repulsed these individuals, but the people they erroneously considered the sole creators and carriers of the choreomusical tradition. Interestingly, the same romanticized depictions constructed around knife-yielding thugs (compadritos), bordellos, prostitutes, and pimps that people like Larreta and Lugones used to question tango's moral grounds, played a fundamental role in the composition of much of tango's folklore; this is confirmed by the genre's literature and much of its poetry. Following the picturesque descriptions of Jorge Luis Borges, writers and tango historians have glorified the honour, courage, and bravery of these masculine figures (compadritos) and the shady places they frequented.

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[13] "Si bien se reconoce que el tango es la danza de moda, los termino lascivo y libertino comienzan a rondar en los documentos…. Los salones de la elite continuaban cerrados al tango en esta época."

[14] "El tango es en Buenos Aires una danza privativa de las casas de mala fama y de los bodegones de la peor especie. No se baila nunca en los salones de buen tono ni entre las personas distinguidas. Para los oídos argentinos la music del tango despierta ideas realmente desagradables."

From a musical perspective, the initial formulations of the genre were closely tied to the Cuban contredanse or habanera. While mazurkas, *payadas*,[15] polkas, *milongas camperas* (rural milongas), *candombes*, and waltzes took part in the dialogues that helped shape early tango, the habanera was the most recognizable influence. Its characteristic accompaniment rhythm provided the foundation for most of the tangos composed until around the 1910s (Mesa 2008). In fact, given the similarities that existed between local versions of the Cuban contredanse and early tangos, the chorography and music of both expressions were often confounded (Novati and Cuello 1980). It is not until the 1890s that tango began to be differentiated by a series of distinguishing traits (Lamas and Binda 1998, Novati and Cuello 1980). According to Novati and Cuello, one of these early markers was the introduction of unexpected pauses in the overall music flow, something highly uncommon in habanera compositions. These unanticipated interruptions in the music were supposedly added in order to allow dancers to display their choreographic abilities (Novati and Cuello 1980; for an example of some of the traditions that contributed to the birth of tango listen to track 1 on the CD).[16]

Over the course of the first decade of the twentieth century the genre solidified its distinguishing compositional physiognomy. The fact that renowned "academic" composers like Francisco Hargreaves (1849-1900), Ernesto Drangosch (1882-1925) or Carlos López Buchardo (1881-1948) were already engaging with tango during the early 1900s speaks of an established tradition that while still in its early stages, was already defined by a clear set of traits and performance practices (recordings of the tangos of Hargreaves, Drangosch, and Buchardo can be heard on tracks 2, 3, and 4 on the CD respectively). In addition, the involvement of these composers of "serious" music with tango suggests that, contrary to what many have argued, tango already circulated across several of the city's social circles at the dawn of the twentieth century. The sounds of these early tangos can be heard in the small number of recordings that have survived from that period (listen to track 5 on the CD). There was, nonetheless, "certain arbitrariness when it came to its [tango's] interpretation" (Kohan 2002, 144).[17] In effect, the main interpretative practice during the genre's early stages (1870s-1920s) was improvisation; tangos were performed on a variety of instruments

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[15] Originally from South America, the payada is a style of guitar-accompanied singing and verse rhyming in which the payador plays the role of a storyteller.

[16] There are twenty music examples associated with this introductory section. They are provided with the sole intention to help the reader contextualize and better understand the particularities of the historical overview. To obtain a copy of the music examples included in this dissertation, please contact the author at alberto.j.munarriz@gmail.com.

[17] "Desde el comienzo del s. XX. el tango adquirió una fisionomía peculiar en su composición, aunque en el plano de la interpretación continuo cierta arbitrariedad."

and without written parts for each of them. Makeshift ensembles would be formed for a particular event and the participating musicians, often amateurs, would produce the arrangements improvising simultaneously on stage, each following, either by memory or with the aid of notation, the melody and chord progression of the chosen piece. This practice was called playing *a la parrilla* (on the grill), in reference to the stand where the lead sheets would have been placed. It is important to keep in mind that the tangos used as the vehicle for these improvised performances were fairly uncomplicated from a compositional perspective, something that facilitated improvisation. Playing *a la parrilla* is still in vogue today, especially in evening parties where musicians gather to accompany a milonga[18] (Pelinski 2000b, 27).[19] It is due in part to the subsequent enlargements of the tango orchestras and the increasing complexity of their arrangements (1920s-1940s) that improvisation progressively fell out of favour. Later, in the smaller ensembles characteristic of the 1960s and early 1970s, improvisation regained prominence and grew more audacious, although never fully leaving the composition's main melody behind, something characteristic in the approach to improvisation within the genre.

The history that follows the birth and initial consolidation of tango in the coastal regions of the River Plate can be parcelled into six main periods: the renovation that saw the emergence of novel compositional and interpretative styles in the 1920s; the momentary decline of tango's popularity in the 1930s; the renewed interest for the dance that lead to tango's golden age in the 1940s; the dusk of the golden age in the early 1950s; the subsequent rise of *el tango de vanguardia* (avant-garde tango); and the recent rekindling of tango's popularity. The first period, beginning around the early 1920s, is defined by the appearance of noticeably different approaches to the conceptualization and interpretation of instrumental tango. The situation is commonly described in terms of a simplistic bifurcation between two main guards. *La Guardia Vieja* (The Old Guard)

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[18] The term milonga is used here in reference to the events where dancers gather to dance. Within the Argentine music tradition, however, the term milonga has multiple and somewhat unrelated meanings. The early milonga or *rural milonga* was an old form of guitar-accompanied singing popularized in the rural areas of Argentina and Uruguay in the mid to late 1800s. Milonga also refers to one the three main music forms encapsulated under the general term tango (i.e., tango, milonga, and waltz). The idiom is also used in reference to the physical place where these three forms are danced, and is employed in general reference to these dance events as in "we met at a milonga."

Like the word tango and many other terms used in association with traditional Argentine music forms and expressions, the word milonga has African roots. In his meticulous examination of African influence in tango, *Tango: the art history of love*, Robert Farris Thompson tells us that the idiom milonga comes from the Bantu language Kimbundu. According to the author, in Kimbundu, milonga means words, argument or issue (Thompson 2005, 80).

[19] "En efecto, la tradición de tocar a la parilla (es decir, con una distribución instrumental improvisada, sin partes escritas para cada instrumento) todavía esta viva hoy, sobre todo en las veladas donde los músicos se reúnen ocasionalmente para acompañar una *milonga* (el baile del tango en determinados sitios del barrio)."

grouped the first generation of tango musicians, artists that favoured the sort of pulsating rhythmic textures that led to the 'more danceable' tangos characteristic of the genre's early stages (for an example of the sounds associated with the Old Guard listen to track 6 on the CD). *La Guardia Nueva* (The New Guard), on the other hand, often described as The Old Guard's 'evolutionary' counterpart, was composed of a new generation of artists whose music was generally characterized by a more subdued rhythmic approach and an emphasis on more elaborate melodic and harmonic textures (for an example of the sounds of the New Guard listen to track 7 and 8 on the CD).

Unfortunately, our impression of the diversity that has existed throughout the early stages of tango's development is often distorted by the tradition vs. evolution dichotomy often used in order to distinguish the qualitative essence of these guards. In the prologue of Julio de Caro's autobiographical *El Tango y mis recuerdos*, historian Luis Sierra writes:

> After Julio De Caro, musicians and audiences would have to choose between two ways of feeling and expressing tango. On the one hand, a trend called "traditional" until now clinging to old compositional and performance formulas. On the other hand, the "evolutionary" trend, which incorporated a series of musical resources, especially with regards to harmony and counterpoint, without altering the essential rhythmic and melodic essences characteristic of tango. *Both aesthetic and temperamental criteria would move in opposite paths hereafter, bifurcating the future of tango's musical journey into two antagonistic and irreconcilable conceptions.* (emphasis is mine, Sierra 1966, 4)[20]

Some historians have been relatively more open. For example, Maria Susana Azzi describes the 'traditional' school as one that "stressed rhythm and produced an infinitely more danceable tango." The author then writes that the members of the 'evolutionary' school "were *committed to the improvement of the tango* through the study of melody, harmony and interpretative techniques, a process they felt sure would result in a more complex and *refined tango*" (emphasis is mine, Azzi 1995, 119). Although far from the absolutism displayed by Sierra, Azzi underlines the widely shared perception of an apparently clear-cut division that she problematically articulates around ideas of improvement,

[20] "A partir de Julio de Caro, músicos y publico habrán de optar entre dos maneras de sentir y expresar el tango. Por una parte, la tendencia llamada "tradicional", hasta ahora aferrada a viejas formulas de composición e interpretación. Y, por la otra, la corriente "evolucionista", que incorporó recursos de la técnica musical, especialmente en materia de armonía y contrapunto, sin desvirtuar las esencias rítmicas y melódicas que le son propias. Ambos criterios estéticos y temperamentales, habrían de transitar en lo sucesivo por senderos opuestos, bifurcando el futuro itinerario musical del tango en dos concepciones antagónicas e irreconciliables."

education, and refinement. These same issues underscore a commentary on the music of the Old Guard published in the Argentine newspaper *La Prensa* in June 1953:

> The ensembles do not exceed four musicians, most of them intuitive amateurs. The performers are limited by the precariousness of their professional abilities and this is the great drama of tango helplessly struggling without finding orchestra directors or ensembles that could faithfully express their parts as they were written, drawing from them the poetic, that what is artistic and musical. Is the tremendous period of playing "*a la parilla,*" improvising on poorly memorized and badly interpreted themes, this is the first *tanguismo*. (*La Prensa*, June 7, 1953)[21]

As stressed by Argentine musicologist Pablo Kohan, the situation was far more complex than the overused tradition vs. evolution paradigm leads us to believe (Kohan 2010). Despite evident differences when it came to the conceptualization of tango during the first decades of the twentieth century, the interaction between composers, arrangers, and musicians that would be later associated with one or the other guard was significantly more fluid than often described. As we know, the imaginary lines that divided these historical periods are blurry at best. As it happens in every attempt to divide the history of a music genre, it is up to the investigator to determine, as Carl Dahlhaus put it, which "congeries of features are sufficient to establish the historical continuity of a genre [style/period] or, conversely, which changes are so far-reaching as to signify the emergence of a new genre [style/period] despite the fact that some earlier characteristics have been retained" (Dahlhaus 1983, 46). In tango, a considerable amount of overlap existed between these historical periods. In fact, the emergence of novel approaches never fully displaced previous ones; they coexisted with old ones in a very complex balance.

The new music produced by the so-called New Guard was the result of fresh artistic inquietudes linked to novel music influences (e.g., western concert music and jazz) and increasing levels of music proficiency and literacy. The radical contributions of musicians like Juan Carlos Cobián (1896-1953), Julio (1899-1980) and Francisco De Caro (1898-1976), and Osvaldo Fresedo (1897-1984), however, did not take place in a vacuum; their novel ideas need to be understood as part of a much larger set of musical and non-musical transformations. The 1920s was a period of

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[21] "Los conjuntos no exceden de cuatro músicos, en su mayoría intuitivos. Los ejecutantes limitados por lo precario de sus recursos profesionales y he aquí el gran drama del tango que se debate impotente sin hallar directores de conjunto u orquestas que logren expresar con fidelidad a sus partes según fueron escritas, exaltando de ellas lo poético, lo artístico-musical. Es el tremendo periodo de tocar "a la parilla" improvisando sobre temas mal conocidos y mal expuestos este es el primer tanguismo."

rapid urbanization accompanied by a marked demographic reconfiguration of Buenos Aires. In a city with an increasingly mobile middle class with leisure time and dispensable income, tango began to thrive. In addition, technological innovations in radio, recording, and disk manufacture accelerated the production and dissemination of the music. Tango rapidly became a highly profitable venture where musicians, arrangers, producers, and bandleaders could make a good living.

Changes in the music, the tone of the lyrics, and the creative approaches shaping them also contributed to rapid popularization of the genre by altering the perception the general public had of tango. Early tango songs were commonly improvised; they prioritized straightforward rhythmic schemes, and most of their texts displayed a vulgarity that, paraphrasing tango historian José Gobello, would make a brute roughneck blush (Gobello 1999, 88; listen to track 9 on the CD).[22] By the late 1910s tango lyrics were a literary form in their own right. The verses of "*Mi Noche Triste*" (My Sad Night) by Pascual Contursi are regularly cited as the turning point in the history of tango song writing (Appendix A; listen to track 10 on the CD for Gardel's original recording of "*Mi Noche Triste*").

Concomitant with this change in the nature of tango lyrics, the tango singer emerged—a solo singer accompanied by a trio or quartet of guitars or vocalist accompanied by an orchestra. The consolidation of the figure of the tango singer altered the relationship some inhabitants of the city had with tango. What was being said through tango songs—the emotions and circumstances that they began to explore—touched many from the population of the increasingly cosmopolitan Buenos Aires. Tango lyrics began to have a narrative argument, and they began, therefore, to expose the worldview of the men of the River Plate region (Martinez and Molinari 2012, 155). Tango was not only a dance and music embraced as representative of a community, a region, and a culture; it was also a medium that described the complex web of human realities of an increasingly urbanized city. The description presented by Argentine physician and writer, Florencio Escardó, emphasizes this important point:

> Tango is the folk song of the city as it expressed, in involuntary but significant manner, something profound, transcendental and everlasting in the soul of the city itself ... The tango—the true tango to which we allude—is a song without possibility of expressive irradiation, without magnetic influence on the crowd, but effective on the individual; it is an introverted song. As soon as it sounds, the porteño goes with the song to the bosom of his own isolation, he retreats to

[22] "…capaces de sonrojar a un carrero."

> the accentuation of his loneliness, he is left with the confidence of his abysmal sentimentality, it would be very difficult for him to explain what he feels, but there is no doubt that he would understand himself much better when he is taken by a tango. (quoted in Sábato 2005, 37) [23]

These overall changes in the writing style of tango lyricists and the themes explored in their texts were accompanied by other changes. Novel approaches to instrumentation and orchestration influenced the music, and major technological improvements reshaped pre-existing mechanisms of production, promotion, and circulation. The result was an overall transformation in the way the general public perceived tango (Ferrer 1960, Kohan 2010, Sierra 1966).[24] Kohan explains the situation at the time.

> When looking at tango's soundscape at the beginning of the 1930s, one can see a striking variety that, unlike what happened within the relative homogeneity that characterized tango's previous period, does not find its cause in the individual contributions of each of the musicians but, essentially, in a new reality that involved the vast development and circulation of tango throughout all sectors of the society, far from the riverbanks and periphery from which it emerged. This situation led to new approaches and explorations and to the emergence of other functions that led to the establishment of different types and subgenres of tango. (Kohan 2010, 19)[25]

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[23] "El tango es la canción folklórica de la ciudad en cuanto expresa, de una manera involuntaria pero bien significativa, algo profundo, transcendental y permanente del alma de la ciudad misma… El tango —el verdadero tango al que aludimos—es una canción sin posibilidad de irradiación expresiva, sin acción magnética sobre la muchedumbre, pero si sobre el individuo, es una canción introvertida. Apenas suena, el porteño se va con ella al seno de su propio aislamiento, a la acentuación de su soledad, se queda en confidencia con su sentimentalidad abisal; le seria muy difícil explicar lo que siente, pero no duda de que el se entiende mejor cuando se le adentra un tango."

[24] In the new urban context, tango began to be seen as a necessary element for the construction of a local modernity, a perception that was at the very antipodes of previous stances. For the intellectuals of the 1920s, people like Jorge Luis Borges, Oliverio Girondo or Gonzales Tuñon, the idyllic images of heroic gauchos upon which previous Argentine nationalism had been constructed were nothing but foreign anachronisms. Borges considered himself a European from Palermo (one of the most popular neighborhoods of Buenos Aires) with little or no relation to Argentina's rural traditions. For Borges, and most of porteño intellectuals, it was in the new urban context where a symbol of Argentine identity was to be found, and tango was the sonic representation of that context.

[25] "En el panorama sonoro del tango a comienzos de la tercera década del siglo pasado, se puede percibir una llamativa variedad que, a diferencia de lo acontecido dentro de la relativa homogeneidad que había caracterizado al genero en el tiempo anterior, no encuentra su causa en los aportes individuales de cada uno de los músicos sino, esencialmente, en una nueva realidad que implico un amplísimo desarrollo y circulación del tango por todos los estamentos de la sociedad muy lejos ya de las orillas y la periferia desde donde había surgido. Esta situación se tradujo en nuevas aproximaciones y búsquedas y en la aparición de otras funcionalidades que determinaron el establecimiento de diferentes subgéneros y tipos tangueros."

Kohan recognizes that this situation was driven by many factors but emphasizes the importance of two. First, an overlap of different generations of composers led to the coexistence of different ways of conceiving and creating tango. Second, the emergence of numerous venues for tango and the various functions the genre had in those locales. By the end of the 1920s, Buenos Aires moved to the pulse of tango (Carretero 1995, Cibotti 2009, Ferrer 1980, Matamoro 1982, Sarlo 1999). Throughout the first two decades of the century tango was played in *sainetes* (popular Spanish comic opera pieces, often one-act dramatic vignettes with music) and other theatrical events; it was performed as background music in the same cafes and *confiterias* (coffee/tea houses where dances and concerts often took place) where tango concerts were organized; it made people dance in the posh locales of the city's downtown core, but also in the numerous communal centres that mushroomed in its outskirts; it could be heard in silent film screenings, city carnivals, and popular festivals; it was recorded on piano rolls and sold in music sheets for piano; and it was composed and recorded to be retransmitted by the growing number of local radio stations. Although a clear relationship between stylistic characteristics and contexts of performance cannot be established, the different expectations that audiences had in each of these places of tango activity suggests the existence of a considerable stylistic variety (Kohan 2010).

The second period in the history of tango is the momentary decline of its popularity in the 1930s. The 1930s (commonly known as *la década infame*, the infamous decade) were years of unsettling uncertainty for most Argentines. In September 1930, a military coup lead by Lieutenant General José Félix Uriburu deposed the nation's democratically elected president Hipólito Yrigoyen. Uriburu's coup d'état triggered a period of mounting institutional and financial instability. With the Great Depression in the background, Argentina's economy plummeted. In this context, public attendance at shows, dances, and other leisure activities dwindled considerably, leading to a marked decline in overall tango activity. Tango's popularity was further compromised by the advent of the "talkies." Until the arrival of motion pictures with synchronized sound, most cinemas hired tango ensembles to provide music during and in between the screenings of silent films. The emergence and proliferation of sound films in Buenos Aires dramatically reduced the amount of work available to tango ensembles and musicians and their capacity to reach local audiences. At the same time, during the mid 1920s and possibly due in part to tango orchestra's work accompanying silent films and various stage productions, some of the most popular tango figures of the time (e.g., Osvaldo Fresedo, Julio De Caro, Juan de Dios Filiberto, Francisco Canaro) engaged in a series of timbral, textural, and overall aesthetic experiments that resulted in tangos that dancers were not drawn to.

According to tango historian Natalio Echegaray, it was a period of "*dispersión conceptual*" (conceptual dispersion) (Echegaray 1999).

Interestingly, in the middle of this period of overall confusion emerged a number of pioneering ensembles that would go on to set new standards for tango. Particularly important at the time was the orchestra of Juan D'Arienzo, formed in 1935. D'Arienzo is popularly known as the orchestra leader that took tango "back from the mouth to the feet."[26] He introduced a unique style defined by fast tempos, a sharp and relentless rhythmic articulation, and abrupt contrasts that quickly made his orchestra a favourite among dancers (listen to track 11 on the CD for an example of D'Arienzo's sound). Many consider him a sort of tango demagogue, a perception that D'Arienzo's own rants against those who favoured "less rhythmic" approaches to tango helped entrench. Despite his opinions, his ensemble rekindled tango's mass appeal and set the path for the genre's golden age in the following decade.

The success of D'Arienzo and other historic ensembles formed around that time—Aníbal Troilo's (1937), Osvaldo Pugliese's (1939), Carlos Di Sarli's (reunited in 1939), Alfredo De Angelis' (1941)—along with that of previously existing ones (i.e., Miguel Caló's, Ángel D'Agostino's, Fransisco Canaro's) peaked in the 1940s, marking the beginning of the third period in the history of tango (Listen to tracks 12, 13 and 14 on the CD for examples of the sounds that define tango's golden era). The so-called *Época de Oro del Tango* (Tango's Golden Age) spanned roughly from the 1940s until the mid 1950s, when tango's popularity began a long and steep decline. This is the fourth period in the history of tango. According to sociologist Pablo Vila, the decrease of tango's overall social relevance responds to a "change of social agents that takes place in urban areas between the mid 1930s and well into the 1950s." The author continues:

> …the migrants flooding Buenos Aires that would constitute one of the main supports of Peronism, do not feel represented by a music, tango, that expresses the experiences of the other social sectors that proceeded them in the urban life, those who were forged in the heat of the tenement and an incredible mixture of races and nationalities. Therefore, and also due to the stigmatization they are subjected to by the urban dweller, they appeal to their own music to express their experience. In other words, in the same way that they do not feel challenged by the traditional political discourse, whether from the left or the

[26] "Trasladó el tango *de la boca a los pies*." This phrase, allegedly authored by tango composer Enrique Santos Discépolo, has taken many shapes through the years: D'Arienzo took tango back from the mouth/lips/head/ears to the feet.

> right, and yes by Peronism, they do not feel challenged by tango's lyrics and music but by those of folklore. (Vila 1987, 84)[27]

The increasing popularity of folklore in cities and towns across the country[28] coincided with the unregulated flood of foreign cultural goods into the Argentine market. In the article "*¿Que pasa con el tango?*" (What's happening with tango?), the author lamented, "sadly, every day tango is further displaced from the popular preferences by [U.S.] American rhythms. First, it was put aside by dancers and, now, it's been forgotten by those who just like to listen to music..." (*La Razón*, September 20, 1956).[29] To make things worse, popular tango artists were not particularly skilled in adapting to the changing sociocultural reality. In his book *Política y cultura popular* (Politics and popular culture), Alberto Ciria criticizes the formulaic approaches of tango lyricists and composers that he describes as stuck in the "nostalgic evocation of the neighbourhood, friends, tango's own past, those things that are no longer around…" (Ciria 1983, 45).[30] This constant recycling of themes and music formulas is part of what Pablo Kohan calls tango's process of "*autodisolución*" (auto-dilution/self-dilution) (Kohan 2002, 147). In all, the situation ended up widening the gap that had been already forming between tango and the increasingly demographically diverse population of Buenos Aires.

The fifth historical period began right at the dusk of tango's golden age in the early 1950s. With the gradual fading of tango's popularity in the background and the country's increasingly difficult socioeconomic reality, the *orquestas típicas* characteristic of the 1940s were no longer sustainable ventures. The large ensembles were gradually replaced by smaller groups that no longer performed for the huge gatherings of dancers that used to follow them in previous years; tango's

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[27] "Una decadencia que tiene su origen en el cambio de los actores sociales que se produce en el medio urbano entre mediados de la década del 30 y bien entrados los años 50. Los sectores migrantes que arriban en aluvión a Buenos Aires y se constituyen en una de la principales apoyaturas del peronismo, no se siente representadas por una música, el tango, que expresa vivencias de otros sectores sociales que los procedieron en la vida ciudadana; aquellos que se forjaron al calor del conventillo y su increíble mixtura de razas y nacionalidades. Por lo tanto, y también producto de la estigmatización de que son objeto por parte del habitante urbano, apelan a su propia música para expresar sus vivencia. En otras palabras, así como no se sienten interpelados por el discurso de los sectores políticos tradicionalistas, sean de izquierda o de derecha, y si por el peronismo, tampoco se sienten interpelados por las letras y la música del tango, y si las del folklore."

[28] In 1950, Argentine folklore's singer Antonio Tormo's version of the song "*El rancho e' la Cambicha*" (Cambicha's Ranch) "sold an astounding five million copies (the Argentine population at the time was 16 million), breaking the all-time Argentine music sale record" (Chamosa 2010, 177).

[29] "Con tristeza, el tango cada día se ve mas desplazado de las preferencias populares por los ritmos norteamericanos. Primero lo dejaron de lado los bailarines y ahora lo olvidan quienes solo gustan escuchar música…"

[30] "Los ven dedicarse a la evocación nostálgica del barrio, los amigos, el propio pasado tanguero, los que se que se fueron…"

audience shrank to small groups of listeners. Variants in the configuration of ensembles were accompanied by changes in the venues where performances took place and, more important, by marked transformations in the way musicians approached arranging and performing the music. In smaller groups, musicians allowed themselves more room to display their interpretative abilities while becoming more musically adventurous: increasingly subdued rhythmic drives; more intricate harmonic structures; increasing use of counterporint. What emerged from all this was a series of new expressions that have often been grouped under the *tango de vanguardia* label (vanguard tango).

The so-called "vanguard" period is commonly associated with Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) (examples of Piazzolla's first ensembles can be found in tracks 15 and 16 on the CD). He was without a doubt the leading force during this period but, as Robert Farris Thompson put it, "there is certainly room for more than one person to represent Argentine music reality to the world" (Thomson 2005, 11), and it is necessary to look beyond the changes introduced by Piazzolla in order to fully understand much of what had been taking place. For examples, Eduardo Rovira's (1925-1980) approach to tango shared much with the Piazzolla's nonconformist split with the past but his music is still generally perceived as having strayed "too far" from tango (listen to track 17 on the CD for an example of Rovira's work with his first ensemble). There were, however, other artists that still found enriching new paths for the genre while remaining closer to tango's tradition: Horacio Slagán's *Quiteto Real* (listen to track 18 on the CD), Leopoldo Federico, the Baffa-Belingieri-Cabarcos trio, and *El Sexteto Tango* (listen to track 19 on the CD) later in the 1960s. The so-called vanguard movement Piazzolla came to epitomize was characterized by a different way of conceptualizing tango and also by a new way of relating with its traditional canon. There was a shared push to find new themes, sounds, and textures through changes in instrumentation, compositional techniques, and rhythmic approaches.

The so-called *tango de vanguardia* was not the only tango sounding in Buenos Aires around the 1970s. A reduced number of ensembles of the golden era had survived the genre's general debacle; the most important one was Osvaldo Pugliese's. Initially formed in 1939, Pugliese's revolutionary orchestra finally disbanded in the mid-1990s, at which point *El Maestro*, as Pugliese is popularly known, was in his late eighties. Other ensembles were el *El Sexteto Mayor*, the orchestras of Leopoldo Federico, and the ensemble of Atilio Stampone, to name a few. Tango, however, no longer appealed to most Argentines. Traditional expressions of the genre were generally perceived as anachronisms linked to an older generation of reactionary men; more modern approaches like those of Salgán or

Piazzolla were only followed by a small segment of the local population, primarily, university students, middle-class intellectuals, and musicians.

In the 1970s, some members of the "vanguard" kept their attempts to further explore the boundaries of the genre creative; these creative mixings involved tango, rock, and jazz. Among the first examples were those of Piazzolla. In 1975, clearly influenced by the US American jazz-fusion movement of the early 1970s (e.g., Return to Forever, Weather Report, The Mahavishnu Orchestra), Piazzolla formed his first *Octeto Electrónico* (Electronic Octet; listen to track 20 on the CD), and made what was probably the first attempt to bridge tango and rock. In 1976, Piazzolla described his perception of rock by pointing out that "[t]oday the music of Buenos Aires needs to be related to that 'noise,' to that music" (quoted in Azzi 2002, 326). In hindsight and despite the relatively strong acceptance Piazzolla's project had at the time, the experience was not a particularly successful one. In October 1978, during an interview for the journal *Clarin*, Piazzolla stated that he felt he had "failed completely" during his electronic period. Musical and non-musical reasons can be found behind the composer's disenchantment. Many saw Piazzolla's "electrification" as a forced attempt to reach a younger audience. This critique was at the center of the "somewhat open letter to Piazzolla" that Tomas Sanz penned for the April 1979 edition of the Argentine magazine *Humor Registrado* (Figure 1.1 shows the cover of the magazine's April edition). [31]

Figure 1.1 Front cover of the April 1979 edition of the magazine *Humor Registrado*

The image shows a reincarnated Anibal "Pichuco" Troilo, portrayed as an angel, hitting Piazzolla over the head with a bottle of whisky (Troilo's favourite beverage). Piazzolla is depicted wearing a number of icons linked to the youth culture at the time (i.e., a Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band logo over his dress shirt and a pendant with the face of Chaly García.) Accroding to the caption, Troilo is telling Piazzolla something along the lines of "take this… you fraudster" (*Chupate esta… Chatun!*).

[31] *Carta más o menos abierta a Piazzolla* (somewhat open letter to Piazzolla) was the actual title of Sanz's editorial.

Sanz closed the letter with the following advice: "Astor: the knotty issue of the music of Buenos Aires and where it needs to go solve it using your natural talent. But don't go searching for strange justifications aimed to defend an "image." You are not and will never be Charly García[32]" (*Humor Registrado*, April, 1979).[33]

There are also non-musical issues that need to be considered in order to properly contextualize Piazzolla's disappointment with his "electronic" experience, primarily the circumstances surrounding the breakup of his second electronic octet. Piazzolla never talked about what took place publicly, but excerpts from a letter he sent to a friend in Septembre of 1977 show that marked political differences made the interaction between Piazzolla and some of the members of the ensemble unbearably difficult. "I don't want to hear another word about *izquierdismo* or communism" wrote Piazzolla to his friend, "I'm fed up with these irresponsible idiots who know nothing of where they stand. I would send all to Russia" (quoted in Fischerman and Gilbert 2009, 354).[34] Interestingly, Piazzolla expressed feeling equally frustrated by the general level of politicization among Paris' youth, something he "couldn't stand" (idem). While not among Piazzolla's most popular projects, his "electronic" experieneces were followed by a number of similar attempts to sonically entangle tango, jazz, and rock (e.g., *Generación Cero*, the *Quinteto Guardia Nueva*, Rodolfo Alchouron's ensembles, *Alas*). These, however, were also short-lived

The gradual dwindling of tango's popularity that begun in the 1950s was, at least in part, a consequence of the significant social, cultural, political and demographic transformation that accompanied Peron's first presidency (1946-1955). In the early 1970s, Peron was about to assume the presidency of the country once again. At that time, Argentina was in the midst of a downward spiral of increasing institutional instability and violence that reached its darkest point when the Military Junta led by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla seized power on March 24th 1974. By then, the gap between tango and most of the Argentine population seemed unbridgeable. Argentina's younger generations found the communal and individual expressive needs deemed

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[32] Charly García (born Carlos Alberto García Moreno) is one of Argentina's most infuential rock artists. Sanz is alluding to the popular staus of García's figure among the local youth.

[33] Astor: el nudo de la música de Buenos Aires y para que lado tiene que agarrar, cortalo con tu talento de siempre. Pero no te metas con extrañas justificaciones en busca de una "imagen". Vos no sos ni serás nunca Charly García.

[34] "No quiero oír hablar de izquierdismo ni comunismo. Me tienen harto estos irresponsables 'pendejos' que no saben nada de dónde están parados. Yo los mandaría a todos a Rusia." The excerpts quoted by Fisherman and Gilbert were first published by Piazzolla's daugther, Diana, in her 2005 book *Astor*.

necessary under the militarized regime in *la nueva canción* and the *rock nacional* movements.[35] Tango never fully disappeared from Buenos Aires' scene; throughout the 1980s, the genre was kept alive by an older audience of devout aficionados, but most predominantly, by outsiders, tourists whose perceptions of tango needed to be accommodated. It was in the mid 1990s that the situation began to change, when a new generation of young Argentines began a long process of rediscovery, marking thus the beginning of the sixth and most recent period of tango's history. This rekindled interest for tango was in part a reaction to a local market oversaturated by foreign cultural products. The neoliberal policies implemented by president Carlos Menem during the initial years of his first administration (1989-1995) had established an unrealistic parity between the local currency and the US dollar that turned every act available on the international market a lucrative venture for Argentine impresarios. In this context, old local traditions like tango and folklore re-emerged as powerful vehicles for the construction of new identities. The appeal of tango and other local musics became even stronger after the economic and institutional crisis that paralyzed the country in December 2001. After the financial debacle, local forms such as tango and folklore were approached by a growing number of young Argentines as a "means of (re)exploring and (re)articulating a sense of local identity that was radically undermined by the 2001 crisis…" (Luker 2007, 69). Since the late 1990s, the popularity of tango in Argentina has continued to grow at a steady pace.

Paris and beyond

It was not long after its emergence in the areas surrounding the port of Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the second half of the nineteenth century that tango made its first trip to Europe. It is not clear whether it was in the port of Marseilles in 1905 or Paris' *Butte-Montmartre* a few years later where tango first landed. Nor is it clear whether it was the sailors of the Argentine *Sarmiento* frigate, vacationing Argentine beef barons, or the early tango musicians of the *Gath y Chavez* company sent to Paris to record who first took the South American choreo-musical tradition to Europe. Despite the uncertainties and myths surrounding the emergence and initial development of tango, we know that by 1910 the genre was already firmly settled in Paris (Cadícamo 1975; Collier 1992, Humbert 1995; Zalko 2001).

[35] According to Pablo Vila, this musically oriented social movement built its strongest identity during the dictatorship of the 1970s and that, as part of its political-cultural agenda, it made a commitment to experimenting with all kinds of hybrid musical crossovers (Vila 1989).

Tango's arrival to Paris would come to be a pivotal moment in the evolution of the genre. The sweeping success that followed tango's arrival in the French capital placed on it the "seal of approval" that the Europeanized aristocratic elites of Buenos Aires needed in order to accept and embrace the "lascivious" dance they previously despised. In the glamorous Parisian salons Argentine tango was divested of its "vulgar" contortions and "stylized" into a "legitimate practice" that the aristocracy of Buenos Aires was subsequently ready to reclaim as theirs. This "reappropriation" has often been interpreted as the event that opened the door for tango's popularization in its native Buenos Aires.[36] While one cannot overlook the significance of this event, seeing the genre's popularization as a direct consequence of its success among the elites of Buenos Aires presents an uncritical interpretation that, as a number of scholars have recently pointed out, leaves numerous issues unexamined (Cibotti 2009; Collier 1992; Garramuño 2007; Savigliano 1995). Most saliently, it disregards the deep-seated social, political, and cultural changes brought by the city's radical demographic reconfiguration and exponential economic growth during that period (Cibotti 2009; Sarlo 1999). For the purposes of this work, it suffices to state that tango sounded quite different, at least for some members of Buenos Aires's society, after having first conquered the French capital.

The success of tango in Europe not only contributed to tango's final acceptance in Buenos Aires; it also had a profound influence on the representative power of the genre.[37] As noted by Jorge Novati and Ines Cuello, tango's European success "also represents the consecration of a nation, because, for Europe, it is in fact Argentine tango" (Novati and Cuello 1980, 36).[38] In addition, the various changes that the genre underwent in the European salons caused many in Buenos Aires to grow increasingly proud of the tango as it was danced and played in their city. In the European salon, the genre began to lose some of the sharp turns and abrupt cuts that characterized its choreographies on the dance floors of Buenos Aires. In order to be accepted by the European bourgeoisie the dance had to pass through a process of "domestication," a process that would eliminate or tone down the most ostentatiously sensual aspects of the dance. While in Argentina, writes Béatrice Humbert, "when tango is danced, one is free to explore its sensuality, leaving thus the door open to the feelings of the moment and therefore to improvisation; in France tango could

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[36] The idea of "reappropriation" has been previously used by Marta Savigliano (1995) and Florencia Garramuño (2007).
[37] By the late 1910s, the tango craze had spread beyond the major European capitals. According to Carlos Groppa, tango's popularity spread rapidly throughout urban U.S. America after the popular dance duo Vernon and Irene Castle introduced it in a Broadway musical (Groppa 2004). While tango's popularity in the United States opened another market for Argentine musicians, North America never fully caught the attention of porteños, their eyes remained fixed on Paris.
[38] "Representa, además, la consagración de un país, porque, para Europa, se trata del tango Argentino."

not be danced without hiding the interplay of the dancers' bodies behind the 'social formulas of dissimulation"' (Humbert 2000, 107).[39] The differences that existed between tango as performed in Europe and Buenos Aires and Uruguay reinforced the idea of an "authentic" tango among Argentines. It is not hard to imagine how this perception would come to further communal desires to maintain tango as it traditionally was and not deviate from its original traits. Along with the changes that were altering the face of tango for many porteños that previously dismissed the genre, its success in cities that the Argentine bourgeoisie revered as cultural (i.e., Paris, Berlin) and financial (i.e., London) models cemented a sense of pride that furthered the perception of tango as representative of Buenos Aires, and by extension Argentina.

The view of tango as an expression of the "sentiments of the porteño," but, also, "by extension, of the argentinean," was and continues to be a widely shared one (Gobello 1980, 245).[40] Evidently, Gobello's suggestion that one can extend the representative power of tango from Buenos Aires or the central region of Argentina to the whole country is a highly problematic position that disregards the demographic reality of a nation that does not end in the General Paz—the *Avenida General Paz* (General Paz's Avenue) or Ruta Nacional A001 (National Route A001) a freeway that surrounds the city of Buenos Aires, roughly following the boundary between the city and the province of Buenos Aires. Argentina has always been a highly centralized country;[41] the city of Buenos Aires has been the political, economic, and cultural dynamo of the country since Buenos Aires was finally recognized as the nation's capital in 1880. Thus, historically what has transpired in Buenos Aires has often been assumed to carry national validity. This, evidently, is not the case. Despite this, one cannot deny that for many inside and, especially, outside Argentina, tango is the nation's primary cultural symbol.

When undertaking a musicological analysis of tango, the long process of "international dissemination" (Pelinski 2009) that followed the arrival and subsequent success of the genre in Paris becomes more relevant. While interrupted during both World Wars, the international dissemination of tango has continued with increasing momentum until the present day. Pelinski periodizes this process of dissemination into three main stages, each defined by their respective historical and

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[39] "Mientras en Argentina, cuando se baila el tango, se deja aflorar su sensualidad, se deja la puerta abierta a los sentimientos del momento y por lo tanto a la improvisación, en Francia no se lo podía bailar sin esconder la relación de los cuerpos de los bailarines detrás de las "formulas sociales de disimulación.""

[40] "La sustancia del tango es la aptitud para expresar los sentimientos del porteño y, por extensión, del argentino."

[41] It is not a coincidence that the province of Buenos Aires currently holds 38.9 per cent of the country's population—15.625.084 of the total 40.117.096 according to the Argentinean Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC).

political contexts and tango's own evolution. The first stage roughly coincides with what is commonly known as *La belle époque*. It began with the arrival of tango to France and ended with the beginning of the First World War. The second stage, punctuated by the two world wars, corresponds to the period known in France as *Les Années Folles,* and spans roughly from 1920 to 1929. The last began in the late 1970s primarily as an offshoot of Argentina's catastrophic sociopolitical situation and continues to the present day.

Gradually throughout these different stages numerous centres of tango activity began to emerge around the globe. The craze rapidly moved, with varying degrees of intensity, from Paris to London, Barcelona, Berlin, Helsinki, Rotterdam, New York, Montreal, Tokyo, and Istanbul, among others.

The increasing international demand for tango had a direct impact on the genre's overall production in Argentina as well as abroad. Along with the growing number of Argentine ensembles and soloists that travelled to Europe throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, local groups devoted to the reproduction of the genre also emerged. By and large, these ensembles followed the models set forth by their Argentine counterparts. It did not take long, however, until elements characteristic of the different locales where tango was transplanted began to be incorporated. This occurred both in ensembles devoted fully to tango as well as in other groups that had incorporated some tango compositions to their repertoire.

With the beginning of the genre's third wave of international dissemination in the early 1970s, a similar process began. The rekindled interest for tango triggered the emergence of a new generation of ensembles across the globe and also increased work possibilities for Argentine musicians. During this period tango also found a receptive audience in the growing number of Argentine and South American exiles that left their homeland to escape the numerous military regimes that took power all through the region. In exile, many Argentines, both musicians and non-musicians (some of them young and having no previous connection with the genre), turned to tango in an effort to build, maintain or strengthen a connection with the place they were forced to abandon. Regarding this period, Marta Savigliano writes,

> In the 1970s and 1980s a battered generation took hold of tango as an expression of the experiences of political terror and exile lived during the most recent military government (1973-1983). As a result, tango went through a revival in Europe and some sensitive argentino artists and astute impresarios launched successful shows in the United States, Japan, and Buenos Aires. (Savigliano 1995, 12)

The aesthetic and conceptual models followed by these ensembles were those of the tango that had originated in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Interestingly, however, in some locations, tango musicians began to distance themselves from the genre's original models. This "distancing" grew increasingly audacious and gradually led to the current situation where in some contexts tango is no longer "imported" for consumption but locally conceptualized, produced, and commercialized.

In *Tango Nomade*, Ramon Pelinski distinguishes between those tangos "imported" from Argentina and those that emerged from local creative processes. His distinction between a "territorialized" tango, "culturally rooted in its own history and geographically anchored in its place of origin,"[42] and a deterritorialized one, "intercultural in nature" and defined by the "stylistic traits and strategies of innovation"[43] resulting from the musical interactions pertinent to its context of reterritorialization, offers us a practical model for examining the processes shaping the evolutions of tango in the last few decades (Pelinski 2000, 33).

As used by Pelinski, deterritorialization suggests a general state of flux and mobility, the weakening of ties between a particular cultural practice (i.e., tango) and its place of origin (i.e., Argentina/Uruguay).[44] It presupposes an overall maintenance of the aesthetic and conceptual characteristics that make tango recognizable in its place of origin (i.e., instrumentation, performance practices, form, musical and spoken language, etc.). Hence, a deterritorialized tango is a tango no longer rooted in Buenos Aires but tied in some way or form to the conventions that have traditionally defined it as such. Reterritorialization usually follows deterritorialization. It implies a marked shift in the ways a deterritorialized cultural practice like tango is conceptualized, produced, and perceived by its practitioners and audience members within its new sociocultural context. It is a process initially characterized by an increasing disregard for those traditional models guiding the conceptualization and production of a cultural product in its place of origin but most importantly by the subsequent assimilation of local elements (e.g., aesthetic, formal, stylistic, performative, etc.). The most significant outcome of tango's reterritorialization was the emergence of a number of stylistic variants defined in each case by cultural dialogues particular to each new context. Since the 1990s,

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[42] "Arraigado culturalmente en su propia historia y geográficamente en su lugar de origen."
[43] "Rasgos estilísticos y estrategias de innovación."
[44] Coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in 1972, the term deterritorialization was first used in French psychoanalytic theory. According to Eugene Holland, "in the psychological register [deterritorialization] designates the reverse of Lacanian territorialisation — that is to say, the process of freeing desire from established organs and objects…" (Holland 1999, 19). In recent decades, however, deterritorialization has been most commonly used in relation to issues pertaining to globalization to refer to the weakening of ties between cultural practices and their traditional geographical contetxts.

the changes brought by the advance of globalization have had a significant impact on the nature and pace of the dialogues shaping these contemporary tangos. This has resulted in the rapid proliferation of numerous hybridized, musically divergent expressions that will be the focus of this dissertation.

Methodology

My research combines style analysis and field research**.** I approach musical analysis, "that part of the study of music that takes as its starting-point the music itself, rather than external factors" (Bent and Pople 2012), as the initial stage of a longer process whose aim extends beyond a description of the elements of each of the variants of contemporary tango analyzed. The focus is instead placed on the creative mechanisms that allowed composers, musicians, and producers to work seemingly irreconcilable idioms (i.e., rock, western "art" music, French impressionism, minimalism) within the framing concept of tango. Through the identification of stylistic consistencies, changes in style, idiosyncratic gestures, characteristics from other genres/styles, this study aims to expose the complex processes through which a series of Argentine composers living in France managed to articulate their expressive needs within their varied understandings of the historically defined boundaries of tango.

Structural analysis has numerous limitations (Agawu 2004; Bent 1994; Kerman 1980, 1985). Most importantly, as Michael Tenzer noted, on its own, it cannot penetrate the numerous layers of meaning and experience embedded by music's intense formative contexts (Tenzer 2006). Access to those deeply rooted areas of cultural significance can only be gained by *experiencing*, through participant-observation, the music-culture under study.

My field methodology was the result of a long process. After acquainting myself with the experiences of other scholars (Barz and Cooley 1996; Myers 1992; Nettl 2005; Shelemay 1992) I established a series of informal conversations with a number of tango scholars, composers, performers, and instructors in France, Spain, and Argentina. During the summer of 2007 I met with professor Ramón Pelinski, author of *El Tango Nómade* and leading scholar in the study of tango, in Girona, Spain. Later that year, in Paris, I had the opportunity to talk to guitarist/composer Tomas Gubitsch, an Argentine exile whose work I analyze throughout my dissertation. In December 2008, during a short visit to Buenos Aires, I had the opportunity to speak with a number of composers and performers about their artistic work and also about their role as instructors in the tango

programs offered at three major institutions: La Universidad del Tango, the Manuel de Falla Conservatory, and the Escuela de música popular de Avellaneda. Only after these invaluable dialogues was I able to begin forming an idea of the most practical ways to deal with the numerous issues related to my research.

Most of the time I shared with the artists whose work I was examining was spent talking about their experiences, their music, their expectations, their reactions, goals, and frustrations; unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to perform music with them. Sometimes these conversations were conducted as interviews; in other instances, what began as a somewhat formal interview rapidly turned into a friendly conversation that deviated greatly from the original topic. I rarely approached these dialogues with a script or a list of questions to be strictly followed; preliminary research and early experiences led me to believe that it would be more instructive to let the flow of the moment dictate the direction of the dialogue and the pace of the questioning. The results of this approach varied; numerous times the end of a meeting found me anxious due to the fact that many topics I had intended to discuss remained untouched. Fortunately, in most cases, I had the opportunity to revisit these subjects in later meetings. When this was not possible, I regretted not having followed a script the first time. Most interviews and conversations took place during the seven months I spent in Europe from November 2010 to May 2011. I first arrived in Rotterdam where I spent most of my time at the World Music Academy of the *Codarts* (University for the Arts). Almost all the musicians I interviewed were or had been affiliated with the Tango Department of the Academy. I also attended numerous rehearsals, concerts and milongas where I got to hear these musicians play. I arrived in Paris in December 2010 and spent the first month arranging meetings and interviews. Most of these meetings took place between January and May 2011. In most cases, exchanges were in Spanish, my native language; I spoke in French (or if necessary English) only when conversing with local musicians. Although I tried to use them only to coordinate meetings and stay informed about performances, emails and social networking services such as Facebook proved to be immensely helpful. Facebook was particularly useful when it came to contacting people I did not know.

In most cases, interviews and conversations offered invaluable insight into compositional processes and the ways in which musicians understood the codes that define tango and other

forms.[45] More importantly, these dialogues opened the door to understanding what these expressions meant to them, how they reflected who they were as individuals and artists when they composed them, and how that has changed over time. Despite their individual particularities, their diverse pool of influences, and distinct aesthetic intentions, these tangos are all expressions through which artists have situated themselves within a foreign context, one with its own norms, rules, and expectations. These tangos have served as the artist's card of introduction, vehicle of self-exploration, and personal diary. They mean as much to them as to those who listen. This dissertation, therefore, also explores some of the ways in which these "audibly entangled" tangos (Guilbault 2005) function at such a deep level of personal and communal signification.

I regret not having had the opportunity to play with any of the artists whose work I analyze throughout this dissertation. That does not mean that I have not played their music. In fact, my role as a performer and arranger has been invaluable in developing my understanding of their work and the nuances that characterize tango as a genre. Through my work as double bass player with a number of tango ensembles, but especially with Toronto's group *Payadora*,[46] which I cofounded in 2012, I have been able to *experience* the music and its characteristic performative nuances (Finnegan 2003; Malm 1986; Rice 1997; Tenzer 2006). It is the process of experiencing the music through performance that allows us to turn declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge. That is, "turning the knowledge of something into knowing how to do it" (Henderson 2009, 185). I consider this embodiment of knowledge essential in any attempt to fully understand and explain some of the essential musical aspects of tango, especially the distinctive role played by phrasing and articulation and tango musicians' unique elasticity when it comes to interpretation of tempo.

Musicians are certainly not the only ones that can contribute to this discussion; sensitive tango dancers also understand this position. Talking to some of them and observing their craft on the dance floor proved to be a very constructive exercise. If one carefully observes a couple of experienced dancers when they take the floor at a milonga, one can recognize some of the key musical elements that define tango. The accents, pauses, swells, and abrupt mood changes that define much of tango are all there. My own experiences on the dance floor have also contributed to

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[45] In some instances, my interest for their music or what I had to say about their work made little sense to them. In such cases, I reoriented the conversation towards other, non-music specific topics.

[46] Payadora was founded in the summer of 2012. The group's original members are Serbian accordionist Branko Džinović, Canadian pianist Tom King, Argentine double bassist Alberto Munarriz, and U.S. American Violinist Rebekah Wolkstein.

my understanding of the idiosyncrasies of the genre.[47] The repertoire at the centre of this work has not been conceived for the dance floor, but many times, in the secrecy of my home, I have found myself dancing to it, just for pure enjoyment or trying to consciously explore the possibility of discovering something new about the work. While I consider that it is the practical knowledge I have acquired in my role as a performer that primarily informs my understanding of the inner workings of tango, dancing has certainly allowed me novel ways to experience this music and its unique sense of flow, even when the pieces being performed were not conceived for the dance floor.

Another aspect that played an important role in defining my relationship with the work of these artists and tango in general is my own background. Having been born and raised in Buenos Aires certainly influenced my approach to the genre and how I understand it. I should underline here that I do not subscribe to the idea that one has to be Argentinean to play or fully understand tango. During my travels and conversations I have run into numerous Argentineans from all walks of life (university professors, musicians, dancers, and writers) who cling to the overly romanticized idea that one has to be from Argentina or Uruguay in order to "really play" or "fully understand" tango. The current global reality of the genre disproves that. One only needs to reference the work of U.S. American scholar Robert Farris Thompson, author of *Tango: The Art History of Love*, one of the best books yet published on the African influence on tango, Olivier Manoury, a world renowned tango bandoneon player born and raised in France, or Carlos Alberto Paredes Ángel and Diana Patricia Giraldo, the Colombian dancers that won, in 2013, the fourth *Campeonato Mundial de Tango* (Tango World Championships) in Buenos Aires in order to debunk the perception that "getting tango" depends on one's birthplace.[48]

Finally, beyond being from Buenos Aires, I come from a family that has suffered numerous losses during the militarized 1970s, a personal experience that I consider placed me in a privileged position when it came to understand what some of these artists had gone through. Both my parents,

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[47] I began to take dance lessons in 2005, soon after I moved to NYC, and I have continued dancing, although sporadically, until today. I'm not a particularly dexterous dancer, I do not have the arsenal of moves and steps that many aficionados have but, contrary to what many people think, such ornaments are not indispensable for dancing tango. As my first dance teacher used to say, "you can walk through a whole tango" and in effect, one does not need know much beyond the fundamentals of walking in order to dance. Soon after I began to feel somewhat comfortable with my limited choreographic skills and I was able to relax when dancing, I realized that I began to listen to the music from a completely different perspective. Being a musician certainly helped and many times partners mentioned that they could tell that I was one just by the way I danced; I followed the punctuations and mood changes in the music much more closely than other dancers. The experience allowed me a different entry point into the enormous complexities that exist within a three-minute long work.

[48] I do believe, however, that a visit to Buenos Aires may certainly help those engaged with tango to further their understanding of the genre, its particularities, and significations.

among other members of my family, were active members of the ERP (*Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo*/People's Revolutionary Army), the armed wing of the PRT (*Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores*/Workers' Revolutionary Party). The ERP was formed and began its armed campaign in the late 1960s, during and against the military dictatorship lead by Juan Carlos Onganía.[49] It was in fact their militancy that brought my parents together. In the early 1970s, still unaware of each other's existence, they were both arrested after two unrelated operations. They met during the early months of their incarceration at the Villa Devoto's jail in Buenos Aires. Within the institution the couple maintained contact primarily through letters and unauthorized messages and conversations allowed by a clever system of communication developed by the inmates. Communication was reduced to a minimum after my mother was transferred to the Trelew's jail in the southern province of Chubut. The couple reunited in Buenos Aires in May 1973 after Héctor José Cámpora (1909-1980), during his short-lived democratic government, signed what is known as *la amnistía del '73* (1973's Amnesty), a decree pardoning all acts of politically motivated offenses. Both my parents intensified their militancy until the 14th of November of 1974 when my father, by then a high ranking official within the ERP, was called to a meeting that ended up being an ambush. He was seized and taken to a clandestine detention centre where, according to testimonies of other detainees, he died during a torture session. After the disappearance of my father, my mother, carrying a four-month old baby, cut ties with the ERP and went into hiding. I never intended to share the details of my personal past with any of the artists I interviewed and I never did it with the detail of the above account. In all cases, I offered this information while talking about their experiences and what led to their own exile. I did it with no expectations; it was something that felt absolutely normal given the topic of conversation. I have come to realize, however, that in some cases, having shared this history slightly changed the tone of the conversation. It is certainly hard to explain, but one could say that it allowed a deeper sense of connection between the interviewee and me; it resulted in an enhanced level of comfort and trust that allowed them to feel more at ease and open when dealing with personal information.

[49] Juan Carlos Onganía (1914–1995) led the coup d'état that in June 1966 deposed democratically elected president Arturo Illia. Onganía was the de facto President of Argentina from 29 June 1966 to 8 June 1970.

Chapter Overview

Following this short historical background, this dissertation proceeds in seven chapters. The first one initiates this examination by addressing the recording of the second album Argentine folklore artist Juan Enrique Farías Gómez produced during his European exile, *Lagrima* (Spanish for tear). While not directly linked to the history of tango in Paris from a musical perspective, Farías Gómez's project allows me to first, introduce three musicians who played significant roles in the development of the Parisian tango scene that developed after the late 1970s and second, consider the issue of exile. The chapter discusses the circumstances that brought these three artists to Paris and some of the personal and artistic consequences of exile or emigration. This initial section includes a description of the relationship these artists had with tango in Argentina and the musical changes that resulted from the process of adaption to their new sociocultural reality. Beyond furthering the reader's understanding of the circumstances leading to the period under analysis (1970s-present), this opening segment examines how tango's longstanding relationship with Paris may have conditioned the reception of its current variants.

In the second chapter I turn to Paris and its longstanding ties with tango, beginning by looking at the relationship Argentina and France shared even before the liaisons they developed around tango. As it has been the case with most Latin American nations, Argentina's association with France predates its existence as an independent nation. The chapter looks at the numerous sides of this relationship and examines the possible role it had in setting the foundation for France's love affair with tango. I then focus on the Parisian tango scene; the historical description is based on its most prominent figures.

The third chapter moves away from the musicians and looks at some of the circumstances that contributed to the emergence and development of the most recent tango scene in Paris. I pay particular attention to four main areas: the welcoming sociopolitical situation Latin American exiles found in Paris at the end of the 1970s; the expectations and support of local audiences; France's overall cultural infrastructure; and some particularly relevant governmental cultural policies.

Chapter four opens with a review of what music critics and commentators from a variety of Parisian publications had to say about the novel sounds emerging from the local community of Argentine expats in the early 1980s. Beyond providing an insight into some of the expectations that existed with regards to tango at the time, the initial examination of these opinions highlights an issue of singular importance in the processes shaping the relationships musician and audiences have

established with tango, namely the contentious position of tango as "popular" or "art" music. I examine the role these arbitrary yet historically relevant categories have played in the reception of the music and how musicians have used them to position themselves.

The fifth chapter reorients the discussion directly on the music of tango. I present a brief description of the musical elements that have traditionally defined the genre and how some of these characteristic traits have changed over time. The segment does not intend to produce a classification of harmonic patterns, rhythmic schemes, and melodic characteristics suggesting a clear definition of tango as a genre. The focus is on the performance practices responsible for the sounds characteristic to tango. I pay particular attention to what musicians do in order to allow us to experience their music as tango.

In chapter six the focus shifts to the processes that have allowed musicians to navigate the historical boundaries of tango in order to accommodate their own musical and expressive needs. My analysis builds on some of the ideas Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin developed during his study of the language of the eighteenth century novel. I present Bakhtin's concepts as lenses that may offer suggestive ways to look at the complex dialogues taking place in these musics. As in Chapter 5, the focus is on the knowledge that allows musicians to turn what is on the page into sounds that the audience recognizes as tango.

Chapter seven examines the new areas of signification created by these new tango variants. The section looks at the role these musical entanglements have played in shaping the musicians' personal and artistic identities. I argue that due to the dialogues favoured by its inherent malleability, tango has allowed multiple ways of articulating a sense of Argentine identity.

Through this sequence of discussion, this dissertation presents a needed contribution to the understanding of the circumstances, creative processes, and motivations behind the emergence of a number of reterritorialized tango variants in Paris since the late 1970s. Using Fariaz Gomes' *Lagrima* as a point of departure to introduce the main musicians that are the focus of this work, I have considered the problematic of exile and how it affected the way in which these artists saw themselves and the music choices they made. Following an analysis that employs some of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts, I argue that due to the fact that what allows us to experience a piece of music as tango is fundamentally musicians' knowledge of its performance practices, the genre has been able to accommodate a series of non-traditional heterogeneities—entanglements that reflect the current realities of the composers, arrangers, and musicians behind them. The examination will help us better understand the mechanism through which artists are able to revisit, recreate or reconstruct a

sense of personal, social, or communal identity through the manipulation of meaningful sound structures. This is particualrly important given the increasingly relevant role tango has played in the creation and performance of identities among Argentines living in and outside their homeland since the 1970s.

Chapter 1
El Exilio después de Gardel: Exile, Tradition, and New Paths

Lagrima

Given Paris' longstanding relationship with tango, there are many possible points of departure for a dissertation looking at the dialogues that have informed the recent evolution of the genre in the French capital and other European locales. Many of the events that have helped shape the history of tango in France (see Chapter 2) since the genre first arrived in the country during the first decade of the twentieth century could initiate this investigation. The event I chose to begin with is the 1976 recording of the album *Lagrima* (Spanish for tear), the second LP Argentine folklore artist Juan Enrique Farías Gómez produced during his six years of exile in Europe. Although having no direct ties to tango from a musical standpoint, the recording of *Lagrima* nonetheless offers an interesting point of departure for three main reasons.

The first is related to the personnel associated with the project. Three of the musicians heard in *Lagrima*, Gustavo Beytlemann, Tomas Gubitsch, and Juan José Mosalini, went on to play significant roles in the development of the novel conceptualizations that would come to define the Parisian tango scene that developed in the decades following the recoding of the album. Not only were these artists influential through their individual careers, but through their continuous collaborations, they created a series of ensembles and projects that deeply marked subsequent generations of tango musicians. In addition, two of these artists, Mosalini and Beytelmann, played a fundamental role in the institutionalization of tango pedagogies and in the genre's overall instruction and transmission in Paris and other European cities. In the early 1980s Mosalini started the bandoneon program at the conservatory of Genevilliers, on the outskirts of Paris and, in subsequent years, he built the academic curriculum upon which the tango program of the institution came to be structured. Gustavo Beytelmann played a similar role at the World Music Academy of the Rotterdam Conservatory; in 1996 he assumed the position of artistic director of the institution's Tango Department. He also has been teaching piano and composition since his arrival at the institution and has published two instructional books of tango arrangements for piano solo at the beginner level. The tango departments at Genevilliers Conservatory and Rotterdam's World Music Academy were among the first institutions worldwide with a serious program devoted to teaching tango and are

today amongt the most reputable places for the study of the genre, attracting students from across the globe.

The second reason for beginning with *Lagrima* is that talking about this particular recording forces us to confront a sensitive topic that carries considerable relevance in any study devoted to the output of Argentine artists working outside their home country during the 1970s and early 1980s, the artistic and personal implications of exile. Like Farías Gómez (who initiated the project), the above-mentioned artists were among the thousands of Argentine nationals that were compelled to leave their homeland during this dark period in Argentina's history. Although the number cannot be accurately established, it is estimated that between 1970 and 1980 up to half a million people left the country (González Martínez, 2009).[1] It is not my intention to suggest that direct connections can be established between musical traits and the personal consequences of exile. I do consider that much can be learned from the examination of the impact exile had on these musicians, the interactions among them and the public, and their artistic production.

The final motivation behind referencing *Lagrima* is purely musical. Although none of the tracks of the album show a strong link to tango, the underlying conceptual approach shared numerous similarities with the musical ideals that will come to characterize the output of many of the artists shaping the local tango scene in Paris and other European locales in the years to come (listen to tracks 21 and 22 on the CD for recordings of two of the compositions included on *Lagrima*). A "laboratory of ideas" was the term used by Gustavo Beytelmann to describe his recollection of the *Lagrima* experience (Beytelmann, interview with the author, January 29, 2011). As this work will show, this openness to engage in dialogues across musical boundaries will remain a fundamental trait of the artistic personalities of Beytemann, Gubitsch, and Mosalini. Interestingly, this search for common ground between numerous music traditions has come to be a watermark in the artistic production of many of the Argentine composers that have been working with increasingly malleable conceptualizations of tango in the last three decades in Paris (e.g., Gerardo

[1] It should be noted that contrary to what it is commonly believed, political persecution did not begin with the military coup of March 24, 1976; before general Videla's Military Junta seized power, numerous paramilitary groups were already actively persecuting, kidnapping, and murdering members of leftist groups, opposing parties, and social activists. The largest and most important of these "undercover" organizations was the *Triple A*, acronym for Argentine Anti-communist Alliance. The *Triple A* was founded in 1973 and was active under Isabel Martinez de Peron's government (July 1, 1974 – March 24, 1976).

Jerez LeCam, Andrea Marsili, Juanjo Mosalini,[2] Alejandro Schwarz). This study considers why this has been the case.

Agents of Change

The suggestively labelled album was recorded during the winter of 1976 at the Fremontel studios in *Le Fidelaire*, a little rural town in France's Normandy region. El Chango, as Farías Gómez is popularly known in his native Argentina, was not living in France at the time of the recording; he spent most of his exile in Barcelona. The choice of the venue for the recording was a decision of Jacques Subileau, the album's producer and someone who played a fundamental role in the materialization of the project. According to Sergio Reuter, the keyboardist heard on the album, it was Subileau who chose the project and arranged to get it recorded under the Hexagon label. During a phone conversation with Reuter, he mentioned that Subileau was interested in projects that engaged with traditional musics in nonconventional ways, ensembles that pushed the limits of those traditions (Reuter, interview with the author, January 29, 2011).[3] This was something that Reuter understood aligned with the left-leaning inclinations displayed by Subileau. Reuter also considered that these political inclinations weighed considerably in his choice to support a project where political exiles were involved.

The ensemble that laid the seven tracks of *Lagrima* was composed of an eclectic group of musicians. On piano was Gustavo Beytelmann,[4] a multifaceted artist with ample experience as an instrumentalist, composer, and arranger. His music career had started as a pianist in different dance bands in his native Venado Tuerto, a small city in the Argentine province of Santa Fe. Soon after finishing high school, Beytelmann moved to Rosario, the capital of his native Santa Fe, in order to begin formal music studies at the *Instituto Superior de Música de la Universidad de Rosario*. A few years later, in 1968, Beytelmann left Rosario and moved to Buenos Aires in order to begin taking

[2] Juanjo Mosalini is not to be confused with Juan José Mosalini. Juanjo, a common short form for Juan José, is in fact the son of Juan José Mosalini and, as his father, also a bandoneon player.
[3] Reuter remembered that one of the groups Subileau was working with at the time was the Hungarian progressive folk ensemble KOLINDA.
[4] Beytelmann is credited as co-author of two of the pieces in *Lagrima*, "*Influencia*" (Influence) and "*Ancestros*" (Ancestors).

composition lessons with Francisco Kröepfl,[5] a pioneer of electro-acoustic and serial music and one of the most prominent composers of the Argentinean avant-garde.

During one of the numerous conversations I had with Beytelmann in his Parisian apartment, he emphasized, "Kröepfl was the musician that has influenced me the most in my life." "Not due to the analytical and compositional tools he [Kröepfl] passed on to me," Beytelmann later specified, but because "he taught me to think about the sonic phenomenon in a way that was unknown to me" (Beytelmann, interview with the author, January 29, 2011);[6] most relevant was Kröepfl's particular conceptualization of rhythm. Musicologist Esteban Buch suggests that the transposition of Kröepfl's approach to rhythm, one based on the analysis of a repertoire (i.e., avant-garde/contemporary western art music) where meter and pulse do not act as tempo regulators, to one in which pulse is the quintessential point of reference (i.e., tango), is a key element in the music of Beytelmann (Buch 2012, 156).

Between the end of 1973 and 1976, the year he left Argentina, Beytelmann acted as the artistic director of the label *Microfón* where he supervised the quality of the label's recordings. While at *Microfón*, Beytelmann also wrote arrangements for many prominent groups and solo artists associated with the *rock nacional* movement (e.g., *La Pesada del Rock and Roll*, *Pastoral*, Raúl Porcheto, Sui Generis, *Vox Dei*). Parallel to his work at the label, Beytelmann continued composing, primarily for film, a specialty that, Buch suggests, consolidated Beytelmann's role as a professional composer (Buch 2012, 158.) Between 1970, when Beytelmann wrote his first soundtrack for the film *Una mujer… un pueblo* (a documentary about Eva Peron) and his departure in 1976, he scored eleven films (listen to track 23 on the CD for one of the pieces Beytelmann composed for the film *Los Gauchos Judíos*).

Like Beytelmann, bandoneon player Juan José Mosalini[7] began playing music at a very early age under the influence and guidance of his father, also a player of bandoneon. These early experiences were the ones that began forming the bond he established with the music traditions that

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[5] Born in Hungary, Francisco Kröepfl (1928) moved to Argentina in 1932. He was a disciple of renowned composer Juan Carlos Paz (1897-1972). In 1950 Kröepfl joined the *Agrupación Nueva Música* (New Music Group/Society); created by Juan Carlos Paz in 1944, the group gathered a number of composers affiliated with the vanguard movement of the time. In 1959, Kröepfl established the *Estudio de Fonología Musical* (Music Phonology Centre) at the National University of Buenos Aires. Years later he became the director of the *Laboratorio Electrónico* (Electronic Laboratory) of the internationally acclaimed Di Tella Institute. In 1962 the composer was named musical adviser of Argentina's National Museum of Fine Arts.

[6] "Reconozco en el al music que mas me influencio en mi vida, no porque me proveyó de técnicas de composición y análisis sino por que me enseño a pensar el fenómeno sonoro de una manera para mi inédita."

[7] Mosalini also contributed as a composer for the album with the track "*Para un hijo*" (To a son).

would later become a fundamental part of him as an artist and individual. (Beytelmann also spoke of the music experiences he had during his teenage years in the same vein.)

In 1961, at the age of seventeen, Mosalini won *Nace una estrella* (a star is born), a talent competition organized by a local TV station, playing a series of arrangements for solo bandoneon of traditional tangos.[8] Winning the competition landed the young Mosalini his first professional job as a stable member of the station's own tango orchestra. Soon after this initial engagement, having already established himself as a remarkable player, Mosalini went on to play in some of the best tango orchestras of the time (e.g., Jorge Dragone's, Ricardo Tanturrri's, Horacio Salgán's, Leopoldo Federico's).[9] In 1969 Mosalini joined Arturo Penón, Rodolfo Mederos, and Daniel Binelli in the bandoneon section of one of the most influential orchestras in tango's history, the orchestra of Osvaldo Pugliese (on track 24 on the CD Mosalini can be heard as part of the bandoneon section of Pugliese's Orchestra in 1969). His time with Pugliese's orchestra was a defining experience; the collaborative nature of the orchestra's work process and the professional ethic of Pugliese as well as "the maestro's" musical ideas had a big impact on the young bandoneonist. In Mosalini's own words, "Osvaldo left me with very clear guidelines, musical and extra-musical. He absorbed all the influences tango's genealogic tree had to offer and gave subsequent generations all the essential elements. He always sought this continuity" (Kleselman and García Falcó 2005, 202).[10]

Throughout the 1970s, while still playing with the ensembles of Osvaldo Pugliese, Leopoldo Federico, and Horacio Salgán, Mosalini participated in a series of projects that aimed to explore the possible intersections of jazz, rock, and tango. He co-founded the quintet *Guardia Nueva* with Daniel Binelli, collaborated with Rodolfo Mederos in *Generación Cero*, and played in Gustavo Moretto's group *Alas*. Like similar projects at the time, these ensembles followed the work Astor Piazzolla had recently done under the influence of early 1970s U.S. American jazz-fusion groups like Return to Forever, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Weather Report.[11]

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[8] The original recordings young Mosalini played back in 1961 have been remastered and published as part of the double 2011 re-edition of the bandoneonist's two solo recordings, *Don Bandoneón* (1979) and *Che Bandoneón* (1994). (ACQUA records, AQ 295)

[9] Beginning around the second decade of the twentieth century, with the increasing professionalization of tango ensembles, orchestras began to be named after the group's leader, a practice that was maintained throughout the following decades.

[10] "Osvaldo me dejo pautas clarísimas, musicales y extramusicales. Supo recibir del árbol genealógico tanguero todas las influencias y le dio a las generaciones posteriores todos los elementos fundamentales. Siempre quiso ver la continuidad."

[11] Piazzolla began rehearsals with his first *Octeto Electrónico* (electronic octet) in the Argentine spring of 1975 (Azzi 2002, 303).

For many, particularly in the tango community, the openness displayed by Mosalini and other young instrumentalists emerging from traditional tango circles was problematic. However, as explained by Mosalini, "none of the guys lived it as a problem…within the tango community yes, some people pointed fingers at us but we did not really care."[12] According to him, these experiences were a "natural consequence of the stimulus of the generation" (Mosalini, interview with the author, April 29, 2011).[13] "I belong to a committed generation…We were not musicians working in isolation, without contradictions. The situation in the country [Argentina] was very difficult in every respect; we wanted to make another music" (Kleselman and García Falcó 2005, 201).[14] Not surprisingly, none of these activities was seen as being at odds with each other. In the bandoneonist's own words, "we were not jumping from one world to the other, they coexisted" (Mosalini, interview with the author, April 29, 2011).[15]

Contrary to what one would expect, the resistance faced by Mosalini and his colleagues was not an attitude displayed exclusively by the most traditional members of the tango community. Some admirers of Piazzolla, the same individuals who had initially applauded the composer's departures from the traditional conventions of tango, raised critical voices upon the composer's decision to "go electric" when in 1975 he presented his *Octeto Electrónico*. Mosalini also remembered being booed at a rock concert where he was invited to play, solely because some members of the audience associated his instrument (the bandoneon) with tango, a genre many youth tied to an old generation often considered reactionary.[16] These situations point to a series of entrenched sociocultural divisions and certain local idiosyncrasies (examined further below) that weighed considerably in the decisions of many artists to leave Argentina.

Mosalini made his first visit to Paris in 1976. He had travelled to the city as part of the ensemble that was to accompany the tango singer Susana Rinaldi. He left France knowing he was

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[12] "Ninguno de lo muchachos (Mederos, Binelli) lo vivía como un problema…. en el mundo tanguero si, algunos no señalaban con el dedo pero no nos importaba demasiado."
[13] "Consecuencia natural de los estímulos generacionales."
[14] "Pertenezco a une generación comprometida. No éramos músicos trabajando aislados, sin contradicciones. El momento del país era muy difícil bajo todo concepto; nosotros queríamos hacer otra música."
[15] "No saltábamos de un mundo al otro, ellos coexistían."
[16] In his book *Rock y Dictadura: Crónica de una generación (1976-1983),* Sergio Pujol remembers that "when taking the stage at Luna Park in his role as a guest musician a sector of *la popular* [usually the cheapest seats available] began to boo, perhaps foreseeing some airs of tango, the music of the old generation. Quick on his feet, Spinetta [the leader of *Invisible*, the group that invited Mosalini onstage] broke the situation with a demolishing phrase: "You have to open up, boys" (Pujol 2005, 38). ["Al subir al escenario del Luna Park en carácter de músico invitado el bandoneonísta Juan José Mosalini, un sector de la popular empezó a silbar, acaso previendo aires de tango, esa música de viejos. Rápidamente, Spinetta freno la situación con un frase demoledora: "Hay que abrir la cuca muchachos.""].

going to return to Paris and, in fact, in April of 1977, after closing shop in Buenos Aires, he landed once again at Charles De Gaulle airport. This time, however, there was no return flight booked.

Guitarist Tomas Gubitsch had arrived in Paris only days before the recording of *Lagrima*. A few months before, while still in Buenos Aires, he had been called to join Astor Piazzolla's second electronic octet for the ensemble's upcoming European tour. The tour was scheduled to begin the following May at Paris' Olympia Theatre. At only twenty years of age, Gubitsch was the youngest among the artists gathered for the *Lagrima* sessions. In spite of his youth, he had already built a name for himself in the rock scene of his native Argentina. At age seventeen, already a guitar virtuoso, Gubitsch had been asked to join Luis Alberto Spinetta's *Invisible*, a band that would go on to become one of the most influential bands in the history of the *rock nacional* movement. Soon after he began to play in Spinetta's *Invisible*, Gubitsch received a call from bandoneon player Rodolfo Mederos asking him to join *Generación Cero*, just as he had asked Mosalini. The ensemble's first album, *De todas maneras* (roughly translated as *In Any Way* or *In All Possible Ways*, 1977; listen to track 25 on the CD), documents the musical maturity of the eighteen-year-old guitarist.[17]

Exile – political and artistic freedom

Farías Gómez and most of the members of the ensemble were exiles; only percussionist Sergio Arriagada and Guillermo Reuter returned to South America once the *Lagrima* sessions were complete. Gustavo Beytlemann had left Argentina in October of 1976. Due to his political involvement and his work at the SAdeM (*Sindicato Argentino de Músicos*, the union grouping Argentine musicians) Beytelmann had been blacklisted and considered by the local authorities an "*izquierdista*" (leftist). The situation of the young artist was further compromised by his collaboration on the production of a number of films that had been proscribed by the Military Junta: including Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's *La Maffia* (1972) and Ricardo Wulliche's *Quebracho* (1974). After a series of phone calls where Beytelmann was threatened, he and his partner decided to leave. In his book *Tangos Cultos*, Esteban Buch notes that, beyond the threats received, Beytelmann's decision to leave Buenos Aires was part of a plan the PRT (*Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* – People's Revolutionary

[17] The ensemble that recorded *Lagrima* was completed by Argentine flutist Enzo Gieco, Guillermo Reuter on keyboards, also credited as co-composer of the tune *Encuentro* (Encounter), and the only non-Argentine member of the group, Chilean percussionist, Sergio Arriagada.

Party) had to send some of its members abroad with the intention to organize protests against Argentina's de facto government and gain international support for its removal (Buch 2012, 160).[18]

When Tomas Gubitsch left Argentina in order to join Astor Piazzolla's octet in Paris, he knew that he was not returning. He had been labeled "*a subversivo*" (subversive person) by the local authorities; the term *subversivo* had initially been used by Argentina's military authorities in reference to members of guerrilla organizations but was later applied indiscriminately to activists or supporters of any protest movement or anyone critical of the regime. Despite his ideological leanings, Gubitsch was not actively involved with any of the numerous political organizations that opposed the military regime. He was, however, a prominent figure within the local rock community, something that automatically turned him, like many of his colleagues, into a suspect in the eyes of the establishment. According to Sergio Pujol, the discourse of rock during the harshest times of the dictatorship was not particularly political in nature; but despite this "emptiness of political content," rock preserved the "rebellious ethos" that characterized the movement in the 1960s and 1970s (Pujol 2005, 53). In his *Rock y Dictadura: Crónica de una generación (1976-1983)*, Pujol explains that "while university curricula promoted an apolitical and functional conception of academic knowledge, the rock world, with its countercultural preaching, with its implicit message of rebellion against all forms of discipline, became a parallel world, a different way of being young in Argentina" (ibid.).[19]

The behaviours Pujol referred to are for many an intrinsic part of their experience as youths, mechanisms of differentiation that allowed them and their peers to validate their existence against the backdrop of the codes of the previous generation. Under the Military Junta's rule, however, difference and resistance were seen as dangerous traits, threats to the fundamentals of an aspired social model based on the "maintenance of the values of Christian morality, national tradition, and the dignity of the Argentine being"[20] (Floria and Garcia Belsunce 1993, 476). And like any other threat, it was to be censored and, if necessary, eradicated. During a speech at the *Universidad del Salvador* in Buenos Aires, Admiral Emilio Massera, one of the three members of the governing

[18] The role cultural expressions played in the political agenda of the PRT are examined in the documentary *Un Arma Cargada de Futuro: La Política Cultural del PRT/ERP* (A gun loaded with future: the cultural policies of the PRT/ERP).
[19] "Allí donde los planes de estudio sistematizaban una concepción apolítica y funcional del saber universitario, el mundo del rock, con su predica contracultural, con su mensaje implícito de rebelión contra toda forma de disciplina, se convirtió en un mundo paralelo, otra medida del ser joven argentino."
[20] "Vigencia de los valores de la moral Cristiana, de la tradición nacional y de la dignidad del ser argentino."

military junta,[21] underlined that the most destructive consequences of the "so-called security crisis" that affected the country were "the corruption of thought and the instability of the values in the youth" (quoted in Pujol 2005, 68).[22] Given the circumstances, it is not surprising to learn that 67% of the more than 30,000 people that disappeared during the dictatorship (1976 to 1983) were young individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 (Vila 1987, 87).

Gubitsch boarded the plane that took him to Paris knowing that he was not coming back to Buenos Aires; he shared this information with his colleague, pianist Osvaldo Calo, during the flight. His idea was to fly to the U.S. after the engagement with Piazzolla was over. He was well aware of the risks of going back to a country where the regime was kidnapping and clandestinely murdering dozens of people from all walks of life every day. The sociopolitical situation and the threats to his life, however, were not the only reasons prompting the guitarist's decision not to go back. During an interview Gubitsch granted Humberto Luna in 2002, the guitarist explained that, "the motivations were of a personal, artistic, and political nature."[23] Gubistch did not get into specifics in the course of the conversation, but after his concluding words, such details did not seem necessary. It's a long story, Gubitsch concluded, but, "in a few words… I needed to breathe freely" (Luna 2002).[24]

I spent long hours mulling over Gubitsch's succinct "I needed to breathe freely;" as Gubitsch himself suggested, much was packed in those five words. In fact, much was packed in every one of the references to freedom or liberty that emerged during my conversations with those that, like Tomas, Osvaldo, Juan José or Gustavo, had fled South America during the militarized 1970s. Although their stories had many things in common, each one of them was unique, characterized by the complex situations that prompted their departures and the set of expectations they brought with them across the ocean. In each case, ideas of freedom and liberty carried a different set of connotations.

When set against what was taking place in Argentina during the time of dictatorship, the implications of any reference to freedom seem quite evident. People were disappearing on a daily basis, snatched from the street, their work or home, illegally incarcerated in clandestine detention centres, tortured, and in most cases, secretly assassinated, their bodies dumped in the *Rio de la Plata*

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[21] The Military Junta was constituted by the heads of the three branches of the Argentine Armed Forces: Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General Jorge Videla; Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral Emilio Massera; Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, Brigadier General Orlando Agosti.

[22] "Estoy verdaderamente persuadido de que la malversación del pensamiento y la inestabilidad de los valores en la gente joven son las consecuencias mas destructivas de la llamada crisis de seguridad que define nuestra época."

[23] "Les motivations étaient d'ordre personnel, artistique et politique."

[24] "C'est long à raconter, mais en bref…j'avais besoin de respirer librement."

or buried in hidden mass graves. No explanations were given to the families or the general public. The victims were not even acknowledged by their victimizers; according to the authorities, their status could not be confirmed. They were neither alive nor dead. They simply disappeared. Against this bleak reality, the significance of the metaphorical "need to breathe freely" seems quite blunt, even when coming from someone who, like Gubitsch, was not involved in what is commonly referred to as the *lucha armada* (armed fight) against the military government or had any ties to a political organization. At the same time and perhaps due to the dramatic nature of the situation, it is necessary to take a step back from the darkest aspects of the repression and consider other circumstances that were for many Argentines, especially artists, crucial to their decision to leave the country.

As Gubitsch noted, the threats he received were not the only reason behind his decision to leave his homeland. Even those who had not been personally threatened or were not being actively persecuted by the Argentine regime had numerous reasons to leave. "The situation was simply unbearable" was the phrase pianist Osvaldo Calo used when I asked him about his experience (Calo, interview with the author, April 24, 2011). Like Gubistch, Calo had traveled to Paris to join Piazzolla's newly formed octet and, like his colleague, also had chosen to stay in Paris once his engagement with the ensemble was over. Calo had not received any direct threats; people close to him had disappeared or were being persecuted, but he had not been blacklisted. Initially, he was not particularly fond of the idea of staying in Paris, but the feeling of "freedom and stability" he described finding in the new context rapidly washed away all initial reluctance. Similar was Juan José Mosalini's situation; he was not involved with any political organization and, to his knowledge, his name had not appeared on any of the numerous blacklists the authorities circulated around broadcasting stations, the media, and event organizers in order to enforce censorship over those whose views were considered "problematic." The fact that he had not been singled out did not allow the young bandoneon player any feeling of safety; nor did it numb him to the psychological and emotional effects of what was happening all around him. The term Mosalini used to encapsulate the situation was the same one that had been used by Calo for the same purpose, unbearable. "It's something that is hard to describe in words," Mosalini remembered, "the exasperation one reaches

at that moment is exceptionally high. There comes a time when you just want to put your fingers in the electric socket" (Mosalini, interview with the author, April 29, 2011). [25]

The expression "putting one's fingers in the electric socket" is common among Argentines. The phrase is often used to express that one has reached an unsurpassable state of psychological or emotional stress, a state of such nervousness and strain that a self-imposed session of electroshock therapy is seen as a foreseeable and even desirable remedy.[26] All humour aside, the idiom seems quite appropriate when considering what life was like in Argentina during the 1970s. I do not think it possible for anyone who has not experienced life under the constraints of a repressive military regime to fully grasp the psychosomatic consequences resulting from the perpetual state of enhanced alertness forced by such a context. At the same time, I consider it safe to assume that we can all understand why an individual would reach a state of high emotional and psychological distress when living in a country where constitutional rights had been eliminated, everyone was presumed a suspect, and friends and colleagues were actually disappearing. Nelson Mandela provides an incisive portrayal of the situation I have attempted to describe when writing about "banning," a term used by Mandela in reference to the numerous segregationist laws passed by the government of Francois Malan starting with the Population Registration Act of 1950, which institutionalized racial classification: "banning not only confines one physically, it imprisons one's spirit. It induces a kind of psychological claustrophobia that makes one yearn not only for freedom of movement but spiritual escape… The insidious effects of bans were that at a certain point one began to think the oppressor was not without but within" (Mandela 1995, 144).

As mentioned above, persecution, threats, and the overall cloak of fear that lay over Argentine society as a whole were not the only reasons behind the decision many people took to leave the country. On top of the violence and the overall feeling of oppression resulting from the campaign of intimidation set in place by the military authorities, Argentineans had to live a censored reality. Soon after the military junta seized power on March 24th 1975, the illegitimate government set in motion a system of surveillance, espionage, and censorship in order to identify and silence possible "subversive elements" across the social spectrum. Unions, educational institutions, TV and radio stations, publishing companies, the record industry, theatres and cinemas, bookstores, the

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[25] "Es algo que es difícil de describir con palabras – la exasperación a la cual uno llega en es momento es altísima. Llega un momento en el cual queres meter los dedos en el enchufe."

[26] In order to better contextualize the popular phrase it may be useful to remember that the standard voltage of the household distribution grid in Argentina and most of South America is 220 watts, twice the voltage used in North America.

press, libraries, and event producers were constantly supervised; what was said, who said it, and how it was said had to be approved by the relevant authorities. Although widespread, the system of the scrutiny designed by the government had a number of specific targets. Among them were the areas of education and culture. According to Sergio Pujol, this was part of a "*depuración ideológica*" (ideological depuration) the government attempted within the various areas of culture. The carefully conceived operation, ironically labelled *Operación Claridad* (operation clarity), was placed in the hands of retired colonel Agustín Valladares. Pujol explains that the mission of the *Operación Claridad* was to

> …organize and synchronize espionage activities within colleges and universities with a thorough survey of those in the culture milieu, in order to detect and get rid of "dangerous elements." Danger was categorized; it was not the same to be a songwriter with some inconvenient lyrics than a former militant of *Montoneros*[27]. Most likely, the first would be forced into invisibility and silence. To the second, if he did not manage to leave the country, death most certainly awaited. (Pujol 2005, 58)[28]

In 1996, among a series of secret military documents found in the basement of the Argentine gendarmerie's head quarters, *el edificio centinela* (sentinel's building), authorities recovered some of the actual blacklists compiled as part of the *Operación Claridad* (I have included facsimiles of these lists in Appendix B);[29] the lists show the name, personal identification numbers, and occupations of those individuals regarded by the authorities as possible "subversive elements." I have highlighted the names of the musicians I found mentioned in these records: Hugo Saúl Ainsemberg (concert pianist), Jaime Davalos (Folklore composer, instrumentalist, and lyricist), Szmsia Bajour (tango violinist), and Juan Carlos Cedrón (tango singer, guitarist and composer). Cedrón was in fact one of the first tango artists who exiled to Paris in the 1970s.

The presence of Cedrón, or any other tango artist, on these lists is unlikely a consequence of their role as tango artists or their association with the tango community. By and large, this social group flew under the radar of the censoring bodies; when it came to music, the weight of the

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[27] *Los Montoneros* was an Argentine leftist urban guerrilla and subversive group, active during the 1960s and 1970s. The name is an allusion to the 19th-century cavalry militias who fought for the Partido Federal (Federal Party) during Argentina's Civil Wars.

[28] "Completar los trabajos de espionaje dentro de los colegios y universidades con un minucioso relevamiento del mundo de la cultura, para detectar y anular "elementos de peligrosidad." La peligrosidad se ordenaba en grados ; no era lo mismo un cantautor con algún letra inconveniente que un ex militante Montoneros. Lo mas probable era que el al primero le tocara un destino de invisibilidad y silencio. Al segundo, si no lograba irse del país, lo aguardaba la muerte!"

[29] These lists appeared as part of an article published in the newspaper *El Clarin* on the 24th of March of 1996.

censorship machinery fell hardest on the shoulders of those within the *música popular*[30] and rock community. The reasons for these distinctions were simple. Contrary to what happened in the realm of *música popular*, the great majority of tango lyrics did not address political or social issues. Although, as Ricardo Hovarth shows in his book *Estos Malditos Tangos: Apuntes para la otra historia* (These Damned Tangos: Notes for the other history), tangos dealing with social and political themes do exist, the genre's topos rarely dealt with its surrounding sociopolitical reality. In addition, the audience at milongas or tango other tango related events were primarily members of an older generation that was not the main concern of the regime; the youth, the social group the military junta considered a threat, did not follow tango, but rock and *música popular*. This is not to say that some tangos were not considered "problematic" by the authorities and were subsequently censored; the number, however, is inconsequential when compared with the hundreds of songs and artists from other genres that were censored. Mercedes Sosa, Horacio Guarany, Atahualpa Yupanqui, Litto Nebbia, León Gieco, and Sandro were some of the folklore and rock artists that were silenced and forced into exile during the 1970s.

In addition, the Military Junta had taken the country to the brink of financial collapse. Unemployment and inflation made things extremely complicated, even for those who were not yet on the government's crosshairs. Added to the violence, the persecution, the censorship, and the financial collapse that marked the daily experiences of most Argentines under military rule, artists had to live and work within a deeply divided society. These divisions could be recognized in many different levels of life and affected musicians in many different ways. As noted, Mosalini had been criticized for crossing the imaginary lines that had been created to separate traditional and novel conceptualizations of tango. He also had been booed when he showed up to play as a guest at a rock concert. Those recriminatory voices were not coming from the reactionary members of tango's old guard but from young rockers who, while proclaiming a stance against the intransigency of the old folks, were acting in a similar fashion. Beytelmann described the situation in the following way, "one side you had the Di Tella,[31] the 'elite of modernity,' that was going to lead us to another world and, next door, you had the tango people. There, because you wore a moustache or beard you could not

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[30] In Argentina the term *música popular* is commonly used in reference to a variety of expressions, predominantly songs, having a folk-inspired aesthetic and social commentary as common denominators.

[31] Beytelmann was talking about the internationally acclaimed Torcuato Di Tella Institute, founded in 1958. One of the numerous centres within the Institute was the CLAEM (Centro Latino Americano de Altos Estudios Musicales-Latin American Centre for Advanced Musical Studies). The CLAEM was created by Alberto Ginastera in 1962 and rapidly became one of Latin America's most prestigious music centres, a referent of modernity. The centre attracted prominent international guest lecturers such as Aaron Copland, Luigi Nono, and Iannis Xenakis.

play, you did not have the *physique du role*… it was impossible to position yourself artistically in that situation" (Beytelmann, interview with the author, January 29, 2011).[32]

Exile – emotional turmoil and *Lagrima*

Given the climate of persecution, silence, and fear Beytelmann, Gubitsch, and Mosalini left behind in Buenos Aires, one imagines their arrival to Paris' Charles De Gaulle international airport as a moment of overwhelming relief, a moment where the artists could finally begin to shake off the feelings of distrust, helplessness, and fear that the Argentine reality had encroached on them. An initial sense of relief was undoubtedly part of the situation: how could it not be? But any release of anxiety and distress would have been entangled in the extremely complex web of emotional conflicts and contradictions that overburden the mind of an exile, political and non-political. While individuals may rejoice in the liberties and guarantees found in the next context, what has been recently left behind is still with them; the pain of those left behind also accompanies them. In addition, there is nothing but uncertainties ahead. It is extremely difficult to define exile, since in each case the word carries a different set of implications, as Tiyambe Zeleza writes: "exile involves spatial, ontological, and temporal displacements and entails alienation from homeland, family, language, and the continuities of self…" (Tiyambe Zeleza 2005, 3).

My personal history has put me into contact with exile decades before I engaged in this work. As mentioned in the introduction, numerous members of my family participated in the armed struggle during the 1970s, and as a result of their participation, many were forced into exile. After the disappearance of her brother (my father, 14/11/1974) and her husband (16/03/1975), my aunt escaped to Paris. She then flew to Mexico City and finally was granted refugee status in Canada. I also know a number of family friends who were forced to leave the country during the years of the dirty war. I have had the opportunity to talk to them about their experiences and have learned a great deal. While their reactions to exile have been markedly different, they have allowed me to better understand the vicissitudes experienced by the artists at the centre of this work. As noted, reactions to exile can be drastically different. Some force themselves to cut all ties with the past and

[32] "Por un lado tenia al Di Tella, la "elite de la modernidad," esa que no iva a llevar a otro mundo y, en la puerta de al lado tenias a los del tango — que por que tenias bigote o barba no podías tocar porque no tenia *le physique du rol*… no había manera de posicionarse artísticamente en esa situación."

reinvent themselves as citizens of their new reality with no apparent conflicts. Others integrate into the new society while never fully leaving behind their previous life; for some of these individuals the integration is never complete and with time it becomes harder and harder to maintain it. For each individual, however, the process of exile is a completely different experience. As Austrian philosopher Martin Buber once said, "everyone must come out of his Exile in his own way" (quoted in Campbell 1993, 46). Furthermore, even through an individual's lifetime, the experience of exile can change drastically.

What is certain about the experience of exile is that regardless of how it is processed by each individual, it marks people in ways that are unknown and unimaginable. Due to the individual and shared realities of the musicians that got together at the Frémontel Studio that French winter of 1976, the recording of *Lagrima* turned into a very particular event. They were all recent exiles. Mosalini and Gubistch had just arrived to France; Beytelmann had been in the country for only a few months. They all had very recently taken the decision, forced to various degrees, to leave behind their homeland, their belongings, their loved ones and resettle in a country they knew almost nothing about, a country where a different language was spoken, and where the social codes were markedly different. They all knew they were quite fortunate. Although the circumstances were nothing to be cheerful about, they had decided to leave and had managed to do so successfully, something that for many would count as a victory in and of itself. The stories these musicians shared suggest that none of them felt particularly happy at that time.

"Never in my life did I feel such tension during a recording session," recalled Tomas Gubitsch (Gubitsch, interview with the author, 26th January, 2001).[33] There was a phone in the studio that the members of the ensemble were allowed to use for free, even for long distance calls. It was that particular phone that was used by the young guitarist to let his mother know that he was not returning to Argentina. "You decided to go out, take a walk outside, in the snow, and you ran into one of the others who was coming back, also crying," remembered Gubitsch (ibid.).[34] We were all in a very particular situation, he concluded. Tomas did not provide specifics about the situation but I did not consider them necessary; there is a popular saying in Argentina that when dealing with a good listener, only few words are necessary—*a buen entendedor, pocas palabras*! Few times those words sounded more appropriate. None of the other members of the ensemble I spoke with described the

[33] "Fue una grabación de una tensión que yo creo que nunca mas viví en mi vida."
[34] "Te ibas a caminar, en la nieve, y te cruzabas a otro que venia llorando también."

situation in the emotional tone used by Gubitsch, but they all acknowledge the "particular" nature of the circumstances and how the circumstances affected, to various degrees of consciousness, their interaction and work.

Their condition as exiles began to play an increasing role in the work of these musicians after their engagement with *Lagrima*. It no longer defined only the dynamic among the musicians but also began to inform the ways in which these artists understood themselves and the musical influences that guided their aesthetic conceptualizations. In exile a person is forced to reconcile two or more realities, as art historian Kobena Mercer noted in the introduction to the 2008 *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers, "*[m]ost people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions" (Mercer 2008, 27).

The plurality referenced by Mercer had numerous implications for musicians, since it could inspire a multitude of internal dialogues leading to new artistic and intellectual questions. At the same time, under these circustances, individuals are likely to undergo a process of self-questioning and rediscovery.[35] For Beytelmann the feeling that characterized his first month in France was not one of rejoicing at the numerous artistic possibilities offered by the new context. The initial feeling was one of intense solitude, which also offered Beytelmann a place for self-questioning and rediscovery. The described situation brings to mind the words of Hannah Arendt. In one of the pages of her *Denktagebuch*, loosely translated as her "Book of Thoughts," the German political theorists wrote, "in solitude a dialogue always arises, because even in solitude there are always two" (Arendt 2015). According to Beytelmann, "in that loneliness emerged this that I did not know I had" shared the composer. Beytlemann was talking about his music persona. In those moments of introspection, the image of the musician Beytelmann thought he confronted was one that did not match his perception of himself. "What came to me was tango." "It took me a couple of years to accept that. The problem was between what came to me and the image I had of myself. I could have maintained the image of what I thought I was but there was something intrinsically false in all that… I was not what

[35] When I first moved to Toronto in 1999, I was a young Argentine musician taking my first steps in the study of jazz. My experience cannot be compared with that of people like Beytelmann or Gubitsch; I had chosen to leave and was doing that with the sole motivation to study and grow as musician. At the same time, I felt that much of what I felt and continue feeling resonates with some aspects of their much more violent experiences. The feelings of dislocation, of self-discovery, of repositioning oneself according to the new surroundings were all quite similar. A similar process began when I moved to Montreal, where I forced myself to immerse fully in the Francophone culture of the city. Thus, I repeated part of the story I had lived in Toronto. Although obviously different, my personal experiences and those of people close to me helped me to better understand what these artists were so generously sharing with me.

was coming from my guts (Beytelmann, interview with the author, January 29, 2011).[36] What Beytemann described was a story I also heard from Tomas Gubitsch. Although it took Tomas longer to get to that point, the questions finally arrived and, according to him, he had to end up accepting what was coming to him, tango.

These words come to illustrate something that all musicians felt to a greater or lesser degree. The role of exile, political or not, affected not only their relationship with their music and those musics which had influenced them, but also the way in which they presented themselves as artists and how they eventually came to be perceived by local audiences. There was a particular interest amongst certain strata of French society for the work of Latin American artists in exile, which was tied to the mentality that existed at the time in a country that was still highly moved by the events of May 1968. This ideological alignment translated into an increased interest in the work of Latin American artists on the part of French audiences and increased institutional support for the development and settlement of these artists in their new context (which I will explore in chapter 2).

Their Music after *Lagrima*

Although none of the tracks of *Lagrima* presents clear ties to tango,[37] the underlying conceptual approach taken on the album shared numerous similarities with the musical ideals that will come to define part of the local tango scene in Paris and other European centres. The compositions of *Lagrima* underline an unstoppable inquietude, a need to explore the boundaries that have historically defined Argentina's traditional forms in order meet changing expressive needs. These ideals can also be easily detected in most of Farías Gómez's previous artistic projects; his work with the folklore groups *Los Huanca-Huá* first and the *Grupo Vocal Argentino* years later clearly shows the musician's curiosity and conceptual openness. According to Sergio Reuter, the keyboard player heard in *Lagrima*, many of the musicians involved in the project were left with the impression

[36] "… y en eso de la soledad se impuso esto que yo no sabia tenia, lo que me venia a las manos era el tango – me costo un par de anos aceptar que eso era la que me venia. El problema era lo que venia de mi y la imagen que yo tenia de mi. Yo podría haber sostenido la imagen de lo que yo me pensaba pero había algo intrínsicamente falso en todo eso…. no era lo que me venia de las tripas!"

[37] For some listeners the sound of the bandoneon may lead to some tango associations. Those familiar with Argentine folklore may not hear it that way. Although known primarily for its role in tango, the bandoneon had been used in other music traditions from Argentina such as *chamamé* and some expressions of folklore from the northern regions of the country.

that it ended up sounding more like Beytelmann than Farías Gómez. According to Reuter's account of the events, in order to avoid extending the recording beyond an approaching deadline, Beytelmann took over the writing. His experience as a trained composer and professional arranger allowed for a timely completion of the project. This does not seem to have occasioned any tensions; Reuter remembered that Farías Gómez was very pleased with the final product. Despite these details, what is important is the underlying attitude toward the treatment of traditional forms. It was a "laboratory of ideas" said Gustavo Beytelmann when I asked about what he remembered about the *Lagrima* experience. *Lagima*, he continued, "belongs to an era under the spell of a curious search. We were all involved in trying to find new things, push boundaries, tear down walls, enlarge the areas, in one way or another, we were all after the same" (Beytelmann, interview with the author, January 29, 2011). [38]

As this work will show, this openness to engage in dialogues across musical boundaries will remain a fundamental trait of the artistic personalities of Beytemann, Gubitsch, and Mosalini. A clear example of this artistic vision is the collaborative project these three artists began right after their initial association in *Lagrima*. After *Lagrima*, Gustavo Beytelmann, Tomas Gubitsch, and Juan José Mosalini joined forces with another two Argentine musicians living in Paris, flutist Enzo Gieco and singer Nestor Gabetta, and two local artists, bassist Francis Le Guern and percussionist Jacques Paris, in order to form *Tiempo Argentino* (Argentine time/Argentina's time). *Tango Rojo* (Red Tango) is the title of one of the ensemble's compositions and the title chosen for the group's only album (listen to track 26 on the CD for *Timepo Argentino*'s recording of "*Tango Rojo*"). The political tone carried by the name is no coincidence. As seen by the titles of the compositions[39] and some of the lyrics of the songs included in the album, there was a clear intention to use the production as a way to bring awareness about the Argentinean situation, something that, as mentioned before, encouraged the album producer, Jacques Subileau.[40] This objective is clearly highlighted by the text found in the jacket of the original LP print of the album. Written by Julio Cortazár, an acclaimed Argentine novelist and essayist who also lived in Paris as a political exile, the text encapsulates much of what I have explored throughout this chapter. As Cortazár wrote:

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[38] "Pertenece a una época que esta bajo el signo de la búsqueda – los unos y los otros tratamos de encontrar cosas, empujar los limites, derribar paredes, ensanchar los espacios, de una manera u otra estábamos todos en eso."
[39] Side A – *Violento* (Violent), *Tango Rojo* (Red Tango), *Pesada* (Heavy/in Argentina, during the military regime, the term *pesada* was sometimes used in reference to the police or paramilitary forces), *Canción para un hijo* (Song to a Son), *Lejos* (Far). Side B – *Raíces* 1 (Roots 1), *Raíces* 2 (Roots 2), *Raíces* 3 (Roots 3).
[40] Under the auspices of Subileau, *Tango Rojo* was recorded for the Hexagon label. Like *Lagrima*, the recording of the album took place at Frémontel Studio, this time during December of 1977 and January 1978.

> When the horror forces men to leave their country, poetry and music part with them; nobody is surprised by the numerous amounts of Argentine artists currently in Europe. For them, it is one of their few joys to give what they have, and the guys of TIEMPO ARGENTINO present tango like those confessing their nostalgias while reaffirming both their hopes for a future of light and return.
>
> This music draws on the old roots of the people while breaking fatigued models in order to enter amazing and beautiful soundfields. What is sung here contains denunciation and repudiation of the oppression suffered by our country, this way of understanding and making use of tango transforms it and projects it to new paths. Behind, unchanging and true, the pace of Buenos Aires beats like a heart that nothing and no one can change, because his name is The People.[41]
> (Tango Rojo, 1978)

With these words Cortazár traces the connections that I have examined throughout this chapter: artists and the drama of exile; musicians communicating through their art; old traditions changing, adapting to different circumstances and needs while maintaining something that seems unchangeable and true. In a sense, that ethereal element where Cortazár hears the "pace of Buenos Aires" is one of the aspects at the centre of this dissertation (which, however, will not attempt to tie it to Buenos Aires or its people but rather to the defining traits of a genre and a music tradition shaped by specific interpretative practices). Despite changes and manipulations, the musical works of many of these artists share something that allows us to hear these musics as part of a lineage, belonging to a much larger sonic world. What allow these aural connections are not the kinds of clichés we often hear used to position listeners within the frame of tango in movies, commercials, or makeshift tango ensembles created by non-tango musicians. These artists have absorbed the music and followed a process, conscious or not, of meticulous examination of the particularities of the genre and its relation with other traditions. During a conversation with a journalist from the Argentine newspaper *La Nación* in 1986, Juan José Mosalini described the work that preceded the recording of *Lagrima* as "the result of an introspective study of that which is Argentine" (*La Nación*,

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[41] "Cuando el horror obliga a los hombre a abandonar su país, la poesía y la música parten con ellos; a nadie le extraña que los artistas argentinos sean hoy tan numerosos en Europa. Para ellos, una de sus pocas alegrías es dar lo que tiene, y los muchachos de TIEMPO ARGENTINO dan el tango como quien confiesa sus nostalgias y reafirma a la vez su esperanza en un futuro de luz y de retorno.
Esta música se nutre de las viejas raíces populares y a la vez rompe con los modelos fatigados para entrar en sorprendentes y bellos ámbitos sonoros. Lo que aquí se canta contiene denuncia y el repudio de la opresión que padece nuestro país, esa manera de entender y de servirse del tango lo transforma y lo proyecta a nuevas sendas. Detrás, invariable y fiel, el ritmo de Buenos Aires late como un corazón que nada ni nadie podrá cambiar, porque su nombre es pueblo."

November 11th, 1986).[42] Mosalini was trying to describe the processes that led to the kinds of dialogues that shaped the textures of *Lagrima*. The same idea can be used with reference to what motivated these artists. More broadly, in their own personal way, they were all engaged in an introspective study of that which is Argentine in the music and in themselves. The uniqueness of their relationship with tango provided a way to articulate their distinct sense of what it meant to be Argentine in the Parisian context as part of a process of rediscovery. Beytlemann, Gubitsch, and Mosalini experienced it, as did many of the Argentine artists that continued arriving to the French capital during the following decades. A search for common ground between numerous music traditions has come to be a defining characteristic of many of the Argentine composers that in the last three decades have been working with increasingly malleable conceptualizations of tango in Paris. In order to explore what motivated these "music entanglements" and their signification, the following chapter turns to the longstanding relationship Paris has had with tango. Looking at the numerous sides of this multifaceted liaison will set the foundation necessary to build a better understanding of the processes that have guided current events.

[42] "Un fruto de estudio y trabajo introspectivo sobre lo argentino."

Chapter 2

Why Paris? Setting the context for France's longstanding relationship with tango

One of the main motivations behind this work was to better understand the complex processes at play in the conceptualization and production of the novel tango variants that had emerged from Paris and elsewhere in Europe since the late 1970s. Numerous questions have guided my work. What mechanisms allowed the artists behind these "musical entanglements" (Guilbault 2005) to navigate, in such a beautiful and seemingly uncomplicated manner, the boundaries that had historically defined tango? Why did these groups first appear and why in Paris? Why at that particular time? Why the prevalence of non-traditional approaches among them? What was behind the various degrees of success all these musics enjoyed? Why did projects working with increasingly malleable conceptualizations of tango keep emerging throughout the following decades (e.g., *Trio Gomina*, *Tangofón*, the Gerardo Jerez Le Cam ensemble, Andrea Marsili's *Fleurs Noirs*, Alejandro Schwarz' *El Después*)? What was behind the various degrees of success all these new projects enjoyed?

At first sight, it does not seems difficult to understand why these tango ensembles first appeared in Paris; the high number of Argentine musicians that re-settled in the city as part of the much larger community of expatriates offers a seemingly straightforward explanation for the surfacing of groups working with tango and other Argentine traditions. It is also possible to see these artists' decision to turn to tango or other Argentine forms as a response to the traumatic experiences that accompanied their uprooting and the shared sense of impotence and nostalgia that may have lingered throughout the community. It is also possible to see this choice of repertoire as purely practical, musics exhibiting recognizable ties with tango or Argentine folklore would have resonated within the growing community of South American exiles, thus guaranteeing a minimum audience.

None of these possibilities singlehandedly explains the phenomenon. In fact, these considerations alone do not fully explain the emergence and survival of the groups that in the late 1970s and early 1980s began shaping Paris' tango scene. If that were the case, similar scenes would

have mushroomed across Europe and the Americas, but they did not. Certainly, communities of expatriates were growing at a fast pace in many other major capitals around Europe and America. Although accurate figures cannot be established, it is estimated that around five hundred thousand people fled the country during the 1970s and early 1980s (Franco 2004). Mexico City, Madrid, and Sao Paulo were some of the cities that, for a variety of reasons tied to language, proximity, and refugee policies, received a high number of Argentine exiles. None of these cities, however, saw the emergence of a musical scene focused on tango. In these and many other locales around the globe, the increased presence of Argentine exiles may have had a noticeable influence on dance related activities —an increase in the number of local milongas and dance studios where tango could be learned, and the proliferation of private instructors who often acted as performers in exhibitions, workshops, and multiple other settings—all the situations in which live music no longer plays a central role. Although tango dancers welcome the chance to dance to live music and would often do so when possible, *milongas*, tango classes, workshops, or dance exhibitions commonly rely on recordings featuring the main figures of tango's golden period. In some instances, if budgets allowed it, established ensembles from Buenos Aires or other cities would be invited for special occasions. In others, ad-hoc ensembles would be formed around one or two musicians having sufficient knowledge of the genre as to prepare a decent performance. These, however, are fleeting music events that do not contribute in any form to the creation or development of a local tango scene.[1]

The described situations point to the somewhat dysfunctional nature of the relationship that currently exists between tango dancers and live music, apart from staged shows in many places around the globe. Based on my experiences in Berlin, Buenos Aires, Montreal, New York, Paris, Toronto, and Rotterdam, I would say that most dancers would rather dance to live music.[2] A good sounding tango ensemble having the repertoire needed to keep a milonga going would likely find a gig.

Any attempt to understand the basis for the most recent period of tango artistry in Paris therefore needs to look past the sole presence of an increasing community of Argentines and look at the complex web of historical, economic, and sociopolitical issues. This chapter focuses on the longstanding relationship that started before the consolidation of Argentina as independent nation. I

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[1] The situation in Montreal deserves a separate analysis. The city has developed a very strong connection with tango since the 1950s (Monette 1991, 1994).

[2] Recently, in almost all the above-mentioned cities current financial strains have considerably diminished job opportunities for tango ensembles.

examine the possible role this historical association had in setting the foundation for France's love affair with tango. I then focus on the Parisian tango scene; the historical description is based on its most prominent figures. Economic and sociopolitical issues are the focus of the Chapter 3.

France's "intellectual tutelage"

Like most Latin American nations, Argentina's relationship with France predates its existence as an independent nation (July 9, 1816). French revolutionary thought had a radical impact on the liberal elites of colonized Latin America. Simon Bolívar, Manuel Belgrano, Francisco de Miranda and many of the major figures behind the numerous revolutionary movements in Latin America lived, studied, or underwent military training in Europe, Spain, and France especially. It was during their time in Europe that the future masterminds of Latin America's independentist movements came into close contact with the ideas that would inspire the French revolution; Francisco de Miranda even served as a general in the French Revolutionary Army. France's intellectual influence was decisive. "We could say," wrote Argentine essayist Manuel Ugarte, "that France conquered America through its books" (Ugarte 1906, 47).[3] Combined with those of the U.S. American revolutionaries, the influence of French intellectuals created what historians Carlos Alberto Floria and César García Belsunce have labelled "an atmosphere of resistance and rebellion" (García Belsunce and Floria 1993, 219). In his examination of Simon Bolívar's nationalist thought, Simon Collier asserts that it is today widely accepted amongst scholars that the reception of enlightenment thought and the ideas of the United States and French revolutions "not only contributed to the gestation of independence itself, but also to the crystallization of a series of new Spanish American nationalities in its aftermath" (Collier 1983, 38).

Nowhere else in South America were French customs and thought so vehemently sought as models in the formations of the national identities referenced by Collier than in Argentina: France was Argentina's "intellectual tutor" (Pelosi 1999, 20). The phenomenon is certainly surprising if we take into consideration that the number of French immigrants between 1857 and 1927 (a period in which over five million Italians and Spaniards emigrated to Argentina) reached only 5% of that total number of immigrants (Gori 1964).

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[3] "Se puede decir que Francia realiza la conquista de America con sus libros."

The allure of French culture was particularly strong among the people of Buenos Aires. According to Alfredo Fraschini, "from the distant times of the colony, France was (for the intellectuals first and then for Argentines in general and, particularly, for porteños) the different cultural model, new, engaging, liberating—one worth imitating or reproducing in order to shake off Spain's yoke and join the course of the great civilization worth living" (Fraschini 2008, 209).[4] The obsession with French culture grew way past Argentina's declaration of independence and, over time, extended beyond emulating French governmental, judiciary, and educational models. When it came to financial matters the eyes of Argentina's ruling classes were fixed on England (Shumway 1991), but when the conversation turned to cultural, moral, or aesthetic concerns, there was no debate: France set the pace. Already in 1852, Juan Bautista Alberdi (one of Argentina's brightest thinkers of the nineteenth century) argued for the need to bring parts of France's culture and industriousness to the country. For Alberdi, a fervent nationalist, it was not a question of simply emulating the nation's customs and traditions but of gradually making them part of the local consciousness through an increased presence of French settlers (Alberdi 1915). History shows that Alberdi's plan did not succeed. As noted above, French settlers made up, at best, 5% of the immigrant population. The influence of their ethos, however, was not proportional to the country's demographic reality. The extent of the admiration for French thought can be easily determined by the tone used by numerous Argentine functionaries at the time. In 1926, seven decades after the publication of Alberdi's words, the then-president of the recently established *Instituto Universitario de Paris*,[5] Carlos Ibarguren, introduced the conclusions of an evaluation of Argentina's education system made by the French pedagogue Desiré Roustan by describing them as an example that "will set the paths for our educators…for us that need to model the still ambiguous spirit of this nation of immigration" (Pelosi 1999, 238).[6] A few years later, during his speech marking his induction into the French Academy, Franco-Argentine writer Hector Bianciotti went even further and declared that

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[4] "Desde los lejanos tiempos de la Colonia, Francia fue (primero para los intelectuales y luego para los argentinos en general y, muy particularmente, para los porteños) el modelo cultural distinto, novedoso, atrayente, liberador al que valía la pena imitar o reproducir para sacudirse el yugo español e ingresar en el curso de la gran civilización digna de ser vivida."

[5] The *Instituto Universitario de Paris* was among the numerous institutions and programs Argentine governments funded throughout the first half of the twentieth century in order to increase the country's educated classes' exposure to the "enlightening" influence of the French spirit; others were the Argentine branch of the Franco-American Committee (1921); *El Club Frances* (1866); *El Instituto de la Universidad de Paris* (1922); *El Instituto de las Universidades Argentinas en Paris (*1920s); *La Casa Argentina en Paris* (1928).

[6] "Han de marcar rumbos a los educadores…para nosotros que necesitamos modelar el espíritu todavía ambiguo, de este país de inmigración."

"one of the most deeply rooted traditions in Argentina is the love for France... where saying France is to say "Culture"" (Pelosi 1999, 6).[7]

Biancotti was not simply fawning over the French audience; his words can be taken as a truthful depiction of the sentiments common amongst various segments of the Argentine population during the beginning of the twentieth century. These ideas were customary among intellectuals, impresarios, and government functionaries but, over time, they began to be adopted by the general public. The French influence was palpable across Buenos Aires: it could easily be recognized in the Hausmmannian layout chosen for the rapidly growing city; the physiognomy of its parks; the city's architecture; and in the cultural, fashion and culinary trends their inhabitants followed. In many respects, Buenos Aires was, as the saying goes, "the Paris of South America."

Blinded by the city of lights - Porteños' fascination with Paris

Not surprisingly, the obsession with France, the mystique and vibrancy of its capital, and the romanticized *joie de vivre* of its inhabitants rapidly found their way into Argentine popular culture and, evidently, tango. In one of the appendices of his book, *Paris/Buenos Aires: Un Siglo de Tango*, Nardo Zalko presents a list of more than two hundred instrumental and sung tangos that "evoke Paris, their characters, their neighbourhoods, their language" (Zalko 2001, 345).[8] More than fifty of the compositions on Zalko's incomplete list are titled in French. Furthermore, some of the most famous characters created by French writers can be found at the heart of some of these tangos. Musette, Mimi, and Rodolphe Schaunard from Henri Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* are found in the verses of the tango of Enrique Delfino y José Gonzáles Castillo, "*Griseta*." In the same tango, Castillo introduces Manon, the character from Abbé Prévost's *L'Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*. One of the tangos of Joaquin Mora and Julio Jorge Nelson is titled "*Margarita Gauthier*" after the sick *courtisane* in Alexandre Dumas' *La dame aux camélias*.

Historian Aníbal Oscar Claisse examined over two thousand tangos and registered 632 allusions to France and its culture (Claisse 1996). In *Tango: Tradición y Modernidad*, Frashini explains,

[7] "Una de la tradiciones mas arraigadas en la Argentina es el Amor a Francia… donde decir Francia equivale a decir "la cultura."
[8] "Tangos que evocan a Paris, a sus personajes, a sus barrios, a su lengua."

> Paris was, for tango, the light that lit the imagination of poets as they, dazzled by the true lights of the metaphorical City of Light, put into porteño-stanzas their impressions of the places and characters, real and literary. Paris and Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires and Paris, two cities that became intertwined in sung poetry and overlapped, miraculously, in the memories of those who knew the magical corners of both (Frashini 2008, 211).[9]

Interestingly, the long-growing affection Argentines in general and porteños specifically had developed for Paris was not the reason why the first tango musicians arrived in the French capital during the first decade of the twentieth century. They had been, in fact, taken by the *Gath y Chaves* Company in order to record a series of tangos for the Odeon Label. At that time, there were no facilities with the technology necessary for recording and pressing discs in Buenos Aires; consequently, artists had to travel abroad in order to produce them (Humbert 2000); according to Humbert, common destinations were Philadelphia, London, Paris, and New York. At the time, little was known about the South American choreomusical tradition in France, but this was about to rapidly change. In *La Historia del tango: sus autores,* Luis and Héctor Bathes tell us that Alfredo Gobbi, one of the musicians brought by the *Gath y Chaves* Company for the Odeon sessions, stayed in Paris for seven years, between 1907 and 1914. During this period Gobbi worked tirelessly, composing most of his best-known works and even opening his own music publishing company that is still in business under the name *Editions Universelles* (Bathes 1936). It was around that time, in 1909, when *L'orchestre de la garde républicaine* began to add tangos to its repertoire. Beatricé Humbert confirms having found some of the works played by *L'orchestre* (i.e., *Le tango pendu, un tango, El Perverso*) on albums bearing the Odeon label. The orchestra's recording of José Campoamor's tango "*El Sargento Cabral*" is the first known tango registered on shellac (listen to track 27 on the CD).

Gobbi did not travel alone; he arrived accompanied by his wife, singer Flora Rodriguez, and the acclaimed guitarist and composer Angel Villoldo. Although it seems safe to assume that they would have been the only tango musicians in the city, they were certainly not the only Argentines there. By the time of their arrival there was already a well established community of Argentine nationals living in Paris. These individuals were primarily landowners and businessmen associated

[9] "Para el tango, Paris fue la luz que ilumino la imaginación de sus poetas cuando estos, deslumbrados por la luces verdaderas de la metafórica Ciudad Luz, pusieron en estrofas porteñas sus impresiones ante los lugares y personajes reales y literarios. Paris y Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires y Paris, dos ciudades que se hermanaban en la poesía cantada y se superponían, milagrosamente, en los recuerdos de quienes conocían los mágicos rincones de una y otra."

with the highly lucrative exports of frozen livestock and grain.[10] The ostentatious lifestyle maintained by these Argentines *nouveaux riches* gained them the suggestive name *rastaquouères* – roughly translated as those who came to show off their "*cueros*"; in Spanish, the word cuero means leather but is also used in reference to a person's skin. In José Gobello's *Diccionario Lunfardo* the term *rastaquouère* (*rastacuero* in Spanish) is translated as "name given by Parisians to those foreigners who seek to draw attention by wasting money" (Gobello 1975).[11] In the Petite Robert Dictionary, the accent is given to the pejorative nature of the term; *rastaquouère* is defined as a "showy foreigner displaying a suspicious wealth." [12] Further indication of the way in which these *rastaquouères* and, by extension, Argentines in general were perceived in Paris is given by a phrase that gained increasing popularity at the time, "*riche comme un argentin*" (loaded like an argentine).

It is again Nardo Zalko who suggests that this community of *bon vivants* played an important role in tango's early Parisian success. The author argues that if tango conquered Paris the way it did during the first decades of the twentieth century, it was in part due to the support of this community of newly rich Argentines (Zalko 2001, 66). In his memoires, Enrique Cadicamo supports Zalko's suggestions by recounting an episode that took place at a Parisian cabaret called *Princesse* around 1920. According to Cadicamo, Elio Volterra, the cabaret's owner, wanted to introduce recently arrived tango musician Manuel Pizzarro to a gentleman named Vincente Madero, a wealthy Argentine landowner who frequented his establishment and would certainly be glad to give his fellow national a hand. The anecdote also allows us to form a sense of the interest that existed for tango in those early days. Cadicamo tells us that Volterra, knowing that there were more than four thousand Argentines in Paris, most of them wealthy and prone to heavy spending, wanted to make some changes to the band playing at his establishment in order to introduce some tangos into its repertoire (Cadicamo 1975, 35).

Like most anecdotes, these stories need to be taken with a grain of salt, but it is certainly not difficult to imagine these *rastaquouères,* individuals with abundant resources and connections, facilitating recently arrived artists their first contact with local entrepreneurs, producers, or impresarios. At the same time, as Volterra hoped, they would have functioned as an excellent

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[10] In a 2006 report presented to *La Academia Nacional de Agronomía y Veterinaria* in Buenos Aires, Lucio G. Reca, informs us that the "growth in agricultural exports between 1885 and 1910 was exceptionally high (6.5% for livestock and 20.5% for agriculture)" (Reca 2006). Back then, the country was known by the motto "the world's barn." According to Reca, the agricultural performance of those 45 years was simply exceptional and laid the foundations for the country's economic progress.

[11] Nombre que dan los parisienses a los extranjeros que pretenden llamar la atención derrochando dinero.

[12] "Étranger aux allures voyantes, affichant une richesse suspecte."

clientele and audience. According to accounts of the time, one characteristic often tied to these South American aristocrats was an unrepressed pride for their condition as Argentines; such flamboyant nationalism could certainly explain their alleged involvement in the promotion of the increasingly popular tradition coming from the country they were apparently so proud to represent.

Little is know about what sorts of tango-related activities took place between the time of Gobbi's arrival in the French capital and the genre's explosive success a few years later. Leo Staas, dancer, choreographer, and professor at the Opera Paris, mentions that tango appeared on stage in 1908, at a show by Yves Mirande, *Le tango en Paris* (Humbert 2000, 101). A number of tango historians have placed considerable emphasis on an apparently exclusive soirée that took place some time during the year 1910 at the house of the renowned Parisian singer Jean Reské. The various versions of the story all seem to agree that it was during the course of that particular evening that tango was first introduced to members of Paris' *haute société*. What exactly took place during the evening, however, is uncertain; some talk about a music performance, others describe a flamboyant dance demonstration. All speculation aside, the soirée at Jean Reské's house is often described as the event that gave the impulse needed for tango's final acceptance. Tango historian Gilberte Cournand also mentions the first tango demonstration took place in Paris in 1910. For Beatricé Humbert, these and other similar events present sufficient proof that by 1910 tango had already established its core "diffusion base" in Paris (Humbert 2000, 103). Humbert's date predates accounts of the period that point to 1911 or 1912 as the date when tango first disembarked in Paris (Sem 1912). Regardless of the specifics, we know that by 1913 the tango craze was already sweeping across Europe.

One of the numerous consequences of the genre's rapidly growing international popularity was the emergence of new markets for Argentine tango artists. Not surprisingly, given the romance porteños, and especially artists, had established with Paris, the city became the most sought-after destination. The view of tango as a door for professional success or an overall good life in Paris rapidly reached unimagined heights in the collective consciousness of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires. In Roberto Arlt's 1926 novel *El Juguete Rabioso* (The Rabid Toy), one of the characters is heard saying, "they say that there [Paris] those who know how to dance tango marry millionaires… and I am taking off, Rubio, I'm taking off" (Arlt 1926, 45).[13] The desire to go to Paris can also be found expressed in many of the tangos listed by Zalko and also in numerous films where tango played a

[13] "Dicen que allí los que saben bailar el tango se casan con millonarias… y yo me voy a ir, Rubio, yo me voy a ir."

central role in the plot.[14] One of these films was a 1948 production suggestively titled *El Tango Vuelve a Paris*. In the movie, Alberto Castillo, one of the most popular tango singers of all times, plays the son of a well established doctor who, against his father's desires for him to continue with the family tradition, wants to become a tango singer. Obsessed with a Mexican singer that is about to leave Buenos Aires for Paris (played by Elvira Rios),[15] Castillo's character decides to take the ensemble that accompanies him in his nightly singing escapades to the French capital. The ensemble is none other than the orchestra of the legendary Aníbal Troilo. Throughout the film the characters can be heard talking about Paris as the "capital of the world" or an "artist's paradise." The view of Paris as Mecca for artists was not unique to the Argentine tango community, but prevalent across most of the western world; "who," asks Patrice Higonnet in his book *Paris*: *Capital of the World* could, "in our culturally unanchored world, imagine life without this city [Paris]?" (Higonnet 2005, 17). What deserved particular attention, however, is the response bandleader Aníbal Troilo gave to one of the characters after he inquired if he thought his musicians would agree to the trip.

> *Los Muchahos*!? (the guys/the boys)…just imagine… leaving Buenos Aires, where there is so much competition. Paris, instead… the champagne, the spree… Paris, where Pizarro, Canaro, and Arolas have triumphed.[16]

One needs to take into consideration that Troilo was not as talented an actor as he was a bandoneonist or composer. Despite his exaggerated delivery, the response comes to underline a series of important elements. First, his description of the scene in Buenos Aires as one marked by extreme competitiveness points to the increasing difficulties large tango ensembles were facing by the late 40s.[17] At the same time, the tone of the response suggests that no tango musician would ever pass up the opportunity to play in Paris. Troilo's words also give us a sense of the expectations musicians in Buenos Aires had created around the idea of an increasingly mythical Parisian experience. In two words, champagne and spree, Troilo encapsulates the bohemian lifestyle numerous tango artists associated with Paris. Paraphrasing Cátulo Castillo, one of tango's most

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[14] Popular tango singers often developed very successful acting careers. Most of these films also featured popular orchestras of the time and even gave their leaders roles in plots often built around the tango artists.

[15] Elvira Gallegos Cerda (1913-1987), popularly known as Elvira Ríos, was a famous Mexican singer.

[16] - Crees que los muchachos aceptaran?
- Los muchachos? Imagínese Don Fermín, salir de buenos Aires donde hay tanta competencia! En cambio Paris… el champagne, la farra… donde triunfo Pizarro, Canaro, Arolas.

[17] The number of musicians in an *orquesta típica* varied considerably but were commonly composed of a minimum of eleven musicians: three violins, viola, cello, four bandoneons, double bass, and piano.

celebrated lyricists, the bohemian appeal of the city was for Argentine artists a bigger incentive than any financial reward (Cadicamo 1975, 11).[18]

Although often highly romanticized, this perception had a foundation; it was based primarily on the successful experiences of other Argentine nationals with strong ties to the tango scene. Words of the eccentricities that the *rastaquouères* and other members of the tango-dancing Argentine bourgeoisie allowed themselves in Paris travelled fast to Buenos Aires. Considerably more important perhaps were the stories, also well known in Buenos Aires, of the numerous tango artists who had gone to Paris to try their luck and found great success. The aforementioned Alfredo Gobbi and the artists referenced by Troilo during the 1948 film (Pizarro, Canaro, and Arolas) were part of a much larger contingent of musicians and bandleaders that enjoyed remarkable popularity and financial success in the French Capital through the early years of the twentieth century; among these artists we can count figures such as Carlos Gardel, Osvaldo Fresedo, Julio De Caro, Genaro Esposito, José Schumacher, Eusebio Botto, Eduardo Bianco, and Juan Bautista "bachicha" Deambroglio.

The French capital and its local tango scene - 1920s to 1950s

All the Argentine artists that played in Paris throughout the first decades of the twentieth century helped, in one way or another, to strengthen the connection French audiences established with tango. Nardo Zalko suggested that it was due to the efforts of four particular artists (Eduardo Bianco, Juan Bautista "Bachicha" Deambroglio, Genaro Exposito, and Manuel Pizarro) that a scene of local tango orchestras began to develop during the early 1920s.[19] The various orchestras formed by Bianco, Bachicha, Exposito, and Pizarro not only set the initial standards for the way in which orchestral tango should sound, but also they gradually became the institutions where numerous local musicians were initially exposed to tango and subsequently learned to play the music, the "Argentine way."

Bandoneon players Manuel Pizarro and Genaro Exposito first arrived in France in 1920. While still in Buenos Aires they had been hired by a French management company to perform at

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[18] "Nacida la aventura y denso el clima que conmovió la Europa de ese tiempo, conviene rescatar para la historia ese gran Puente que unía a Buenos Aires con Paris, en lo que fue la búsqueda de un mercado de bohemia, incentivo mayor que el del dinero, para el artista nuestro."

[19] The comment was part of an informal presentation on the career of tango musician Manuel Pizarro that Zalko gave at small Parisian art gallery on February 8th 2011.

Marseilles' *Tabaris* Cabaret. Accounts of the musicians' first international experience vary. According to Enrique Cadicamo, their dissatisfaction with the financial arrangement made the artists shorten the contractual one-year agreement to a three-month engagement. In Nardo Zalko's version, however, we read that the city was too small for two artists who were ready for bigger things. Whatever the reason, we know that once their commitment at the Tabaris was over, Pizarro and Exposito moved to Paris where they formed a tango orchestra with musicians from Argentina and France. The orchestra began to perform in a cabaret named *Princesse*. Soon after, however, following the increasing popularity of the ensemble and tango in general, the establishment would change its name to a much more "Argentine sounding" one, El Garrón.[20] El Garrón rapidly became the city's hub of tango activity. In fact, it was on the ground level of that same establishment where a few years later, in 1925, Eduardo Bianco and Juan Bautista "Bachicha" Deambroglio would open another cabaret they named *Palermo,* after a popular neighborhood in Buenos Aires. Bachicha had been summoned to Paris by Eduardo Bianco, and upon his arrival the duo teamed up to form the *Orquesta Típica Bianco-Bachicha* that opened at the Palermo in 1925 (listen to tack 28 on the CD).

Throughout the twenties and thirties the demand for tango grew; orchestras were mushrooming at a pace matched in no other European city. The increasing popularity of the genre reached its peak in the early 1930s and did not wane until late in the decade. The vibrancy of the local tango scene leads historian Nardo Zalko to conclude that, "never had Paris witnessed such a remarkable level of tango activity (Zalko 2001, 223).[21] As expected, the opportunities that arose in such a thriving context were numerous and some astute artists and impresarios fully capitalized on them. Manuel Pizarro was one of them; he maintained his own orchestra at *El Garrón* but also began forming tango ensembles for other venues needing live music. In another display of his entrepreneurial skills, Pizarro left the ensembles he formed in the hands of his brothers. Salvador Pizarro was left in charge of the ensemble at the Hermitage de Champs Élysées; Juan Pizarro took over the orchestra at the Hermitage de Longchamp; Alfredo Pizarro worked at the Washington Palace de rue Magelen; and the group that played at the Hotel Claridge de Champs Élysées was left under the baton of Domingo Pizarro. Unlike common arrangements today, the contracts orchestras signed then often covered months or even years. It was not only those artists who resided in Paris

[20] The term *Garrón* is popularly used in reference to the act of receiving something, a good or deed, without having had to pay or work for it. It is also used in reference to an unexpected and unpleasant event.

[21] "Si los años cuarenta forjaron en Buenos Aires lo que hoy se recuerda como la "época de oro", los años treinta fueron un tiempo de Gloria para el tango en Paris… Nunca Paris había contado con una presencia tanguera tan contundente, tan espesa."

who profited from this arrangement. Argentine artists like Fransisco Canaro also benefited. Canaro arrived in Paris in April 1925 in order to begin a nine-month-long season at the cabaret *Florida*. As expected, the season was an absolute success that could keep giving dividends. A series of commitments prevented Canaro from prolonging his stay in Paris, but before returning to Buenos Aires, the astute impresario decided to leave the ensemble he had formed under the direction and administration of his brothers Rafael and Juan Canaro. In his memoirs, Canaro remembers having done so in order that his brothers would "go on and establish themselves on their own" (Canaro 1999, 151).[22] Canaro's decision sheds some light on the artists' entrepreneurial astuteness at the same time as it confirms the high demand that existed for the music at the time. More importantly, it allows us to get a sense of how profitable a successful tango ensemble was, something that goes to validate, once again, the general expectations of success and financial prosperity Argentine artists had tied to the Parisian experience.

As stated in his memoirs, Canaro believed the success of the ensemble he left under the care of his brothers was guaranteed by the well earned prestige of his name (Canaro 1999, 151). He was, after all, one of Argentina's leading tango composers and bandleaders at the time; his brisk rhythmic approach had established one of the two major interpretative styles in vogue in Buenos Aires. The other was Roberto Firpo's: an approach defined by comparatively calmer rhythmic textures, more elaborate melodic writing, and increasingly contrasting textures. By the time Canaro arrived in Paris in 1925, tango had already "evicted most of the other rhythms popular at the time" (Cadicamo 1975, 53),[23] but it is uncertain if people in Paris would have been aware of Canaro's reputation in Argentina. In the hands of his brothers, his name could have certainly guaranteed certain standards when it came to the music, but when it came to the show's local appeal, it seems more likely to link the success of the show to the "made in Argentina" label under which tango ensembles had to perform. Argentine tango ensembles not only performed under names that showed their place of origin; french legislation at the time indicated that foreign musicians could only perform in their "national dress." For the Argentine musicians this meant leaving behind the formal suits commonly used for performance and now dress as gauchos,[24] wearing baggy, accordion-pleated trousers called *bombachas*, belts, boots, and even woollen ponchos. The apparent authenticating power of the

[22] "Deje organizada la orquesta bajo la dirección y administración de mis hermanos para que, con mi nombre, que se los dejaba garantizado por un buen ganado prestigio, ellos pudieran campear por sus fueros y hacerse una situación independiente."
[23] "El tango había desalojado la mayoría de los otros ritmos."
[24] In a nutshell, the gaucho was a nomadic rural character that lived in the plains of Argentina.

imagery and the "made in Argentina" label were crucial for success of the first tango ensembles that played in Paris. It was also a trend continued by most of the ensembles that were subsequently formed in the city. The recognized relevance of the brand can be seen in names chosen for various ensembles: *Orchestre Sud Américain José M. Lucchesi*, *Orchestre Típica Argentina René Pesenti*, *Orchestre Argentina Manuel Pizarro* (listen to track 29 on the CD), and *Le Véritable Orchestre Argentine Tano Genaro*.

The names of these ensembles were not intended to deceive the public; most of the musicians taking part in the numerous groups that emerged throughout the 1920s were Argentines. That was certainly the case with the initial formations of Pizarro's own ensemble, that of Bianco and Bachicha, and most of those who were brought from South America for short engagements (i.e., Francisco Canaro, Osvaldo Fresedo, Julio De Caro). Given the increasing demand that existed for the music, however, the situation was about to rapidly change. Local musicians playing in various bands that enlivened the city's dance halls were already adapting to the particularities of tango, since the demand for the genre had made it a feature of their repertoires. Notably, a growing number of local musicians began to concentrate their effort almost entirely on tango. By the end of the 1920s a considerable number of tango ensembles, even those run by Argentines, had almost no Argentines among their members. In 1929, after an exclusive performance Eduardo Bianco's ensemble played for Victor Emmanuel III of Italy,[25] the king who, after recognizing the Italian origins of the leader's family name, asked if there were others in the group with Italian blood. Bianco, Cadicamo tells us in his memoirs, "introduced Pecci, the only member of the ensemble of Italian descent, since the others were Hungarians, French and Spaniards" (Cadicamo 1975, 111).[26] It is again Zalko who tells us that "the tango orchestras, led by people from the River Plate area had become cosmopolitan formations that housed virtuosos of all nationalities caught by the irresistible virus of the genre" (Zalko 2001, 223).[27]

From a pragmatic perspective, the increasing participation of local musicians in the Parisian tango scene was a consequence of the demands of the growing market, the underlying principle of the supply and demand model. Over time, however, the increasing participation of these artists played a role of greater importance than covering the momentary needs of the entertainment

[25] Member of the House of Savoy, Vittorio Emanuele III was Italy's King from July of 1900 to May of 1946.
[26] "...le presento a Pecci, el único, puesto que los demás componentes eran húngaros, franceses y españoles."
[27] "Las orquestas de tango, dirigidas por rioplatenses se habían transformado a menudo en formaciones cosmopolitas que acogían a virtuosos de todas las nacionalidades contaminados por el virus irresistible del genero."

business. Through their involvement with tango, these musicians set the foundations of a local tango scene that was to carry the South American tradition beyond the subsequent fading of the tango craze. Evidently, this process is intimately tied to the strong connection local audiences established with the genre. There was always an audience avid to listen and dance—a process that did not happen in all the locales where tango initially hit.[28]

Even more important from a musical perspective is the role these musicians played in the long process that gradually led to the emergence of local ways of approaching the conceptualization and performance of tango. In his examination of the development of Finnish tango, Pirjo Kukkonen mentions that after a period that can be best described as one of experimentation, "truly local conceptualizations of tango" emerged. Finnish tango, Kukkonen concludes, "turned out to be a mirror image of Finnish mentality: silence, nature, and a positive slowness" (Kukkonen 2000, 288). Something similar took place in France. According to Nardo Zalko, a move towards a more "French-sounding" tango (*tango afrancesado*) was already evident in the approach of some of the Argentine artists who had resettled in Paris in the early 20s, and points specifically to the orchestra of bandoneon player, composer, and leader Mario Melfi (listen to track 30 on the CD). Melfi's orchestra started its Parisian experience in 1931, and was, writes the author, "perhaps the one that best acclimatized to France, creating a sort of 'Frenchified tango', less vigorous than the argentine, more romantic, somewhat in the style of the songs of Tino Rossi, who had in fact sung with the group" (Zalko 2001, 155).[29] Melfi's orchestra marked the beginning of a period that could be equated with the one that predated the emergence of local approaches to tango referenced by Kukkonen—a period characterized by the attempt of some orchestra leaders like Melfi, Jean Levesque, and José M. Lucchesi to adapt their own personal ideas on Argentine tango to the idiosyncrasies and sensibilities they considered characteristic of local audiences. It is impossible to establish an accurate periodization since there is a considerable overlap between the orchestras and their stylistic periods. However, recordings of the orchestras of Quintin Verdu or Tito Fuggi suggest a distinctive style of interpretation; when compared with that of their Argentine counterparts, it can be roughly characterized by a less pulsating rhythm, more blunt contrasts between sections, and a

[28] London is a case in point. Understanding why no local tango scene survived the initial infatuation with the genre in London demands the examination of multiple historical, social, and cultural issues, something that is beyond the possibilities of this work. The fact that the tango craze did not leave behind an established community of musicians and dancers is certainty striking.

[29] "La orquesta de Melfi, que inicio su experiencia parisina en 1931, fue la que tal vez mejor se aclimato en Francia, creando una suerte de "tango afrancesado", menos vigoroso que el argentino, mas romántico, un poco al estilo de las canciones de Tino Rossi, quien por otra parte canto un tiempo en su formación."

more languid approach when it came to melodic articulation. "A school of French tango was in the process of getting established…and autochthonous compositions began to compete with the creations coming from the River Plate area" (Zalko 2001, 224).[30]

In her book *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, Marta Savigliano argues that the aesthetic changes that began to differentiate the numerous variants of European tango from the tango associated with Argentina were primarily a response to the choreographic modifications needed in order to stylize the 'rough' figures of the original dance. According to Savigliano, deep dips, backward bends, and dizzying sways were some of the contentious figures. The author suggests that although phonographic recordings and printed music from Argentina were available to the French public, local artists preferred to write their own "exotically languid" tangos displaying only some of its characteristic rhythm (Savigliano 1995, 119). Savigliano is making reference here to the changes that took place soon after tango's initial arrival in Europe during the years prior to the First World War. Interestingly, she interprets later changes in the music as a consequence of changes in choreographic demeanour: "the accent on morally defiant or conforming movements depended on the social occasion and where the tango was danced, but it also depended on the music…. "sensual" tango music developed after tango's popularization in Europe and at home" (Savigliano 1995, 153). Savigliano is not the only scholar to understand the changes that came to define European tango variants as direct results of some sort of choreographic sanitization. According to dance scholar Alexandra Weiland, none of the mixed bag of elements that she sees at the core of Argentine tango's spirit reached Europe; revolt (*la révolte*), catharsis/emotional release (*le défoulement*), countercultural reactions (*la réaction contré-culturelle*), the complaints of gauchos, compadritos, and payadores (*la complainte des gauchos, de « compadritos », des « payadores »*), never made it across the Atlantic.[31] Given the culture, context, and language-specific nature of most of these elements, it is clear why they were not part of the tango that reached Europe. Weiland concludes that in the process of adapting tango to their personal tastes, the members of France's high society transformed the choreography and created a new dance, French tango (Weiland 1996, 49).[32]

Weiland does not mention music, but it seems safe to assume that the "new dance" was not set into motion by the vigorous pulsations that gave life to the earlier, "unpurified," versions. While

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[30] "Una escuela de tango francés se establecía, y las composiciones autóctonas comenzaban a competir con las creaciones rioplatenses…"
[31] Weiland's description of what she understands as the sprit of Argentine tango is taken from Beatrice Humbert.
[32] "C'est ainsi que la haute société française en 'adaptant a son gout personnel, en transforment la chorégraphie et est à l'origine de la création d'une nouvelle dance: « le tango française »."

one cannot disregard the effects changes in the choreographies would have had on the music that set them into motion, generalizations like Savigliano's or Weiland's are rendered hollow by the surprising lack of attention paid to the influence that local musics, cultural traditions, overall aesthetic preferences, and other sociocultural variables, might have had on the new music conceptualizations, even if these were meant purely for the dance floor.

The events described up to this point clearly show that during the three decades bracketed by the arrival of tango in France during the first decade of the twentieth century and the end of the genre's Parisian glory days during the late 1930s, French audiences (and Parisians especially) established an extraordinary connection with the Argentine choreomusical tradition. It is through this particular relationship and the strengthening of the perception of tango as a local expression that we can begin to understand the renaissance of the tradition once World War II was over. No other situation would explain the rapid resurgence of tango ensembles in Paris after the war. Tito Fuggi, one of central figures of Paris's tango scene recalls:

> After the war and until 1948, I played the bass with France's jazz greats, Alix Combelle, Chiboust Noël, Pierre Brun, Léo Chauliac, Jean Marion, Michel Emer, Emil Stern, Aimé Barelli…Until we crossed paths with Quentin Verdu again. He proposed returning to his orchestra as a bandoneon player and promised to introduce me to a publisher who wanted to create a new repertoire of tangos. Two months later I was playing with him at the Olympia and handing Editions Universelles my first scores (quoted in Zalko 2001, 275).[33]

Verdu's was not the only orchestra to emerge during the post-war period; other ensembles like that of Jacques Morino, Toni Scala, and Marcel Feijoo began to play around Paris and across France.

Musique pour l'amour de la musique – 1950s to 1970s

It was also around the period that followed the end of the Second World War that a series of local musicians, accordionists primarily, began to approach tango as music having no connection

[33] "Después de la Guerra, toque el contrabajo, hasta 1948, con los grandes del jazz francés, Alix Combelle, Noël Chiboust, Pierre Brun, Léo Chauliac, Jean Marion, Michel Emer, Emil Stern, Aimé Barelli…. Hasta que nuevamente mi camino se cruzo con el de Quentin Verdu, que me propuso retomar el bandoneon en su orquesta y me prometió presentarme a un editor que deseaba crear un nuevo repertorio de tangos. Dos meses mas tarde yo tocaba con el en el Olympia y presentaba mis primeras partituras a las ediciones Universelles."

to the dance floor or the stage. While it was not uncommon for orchestras to play in concert-like settings, most of their engagements were associated in one way or another with dances or vaudeville-like shows. Now music making became the sole purpose of the performance. The new approach was in part a consequence of the numerous changes tango had seen in Buenos Aires after the end of the genre's golden era in the late 1940s.

During the 1950s, Argentina entered a period of financial difficulties and increased military intervention in politics. In the progressively unstable situation, most of the venues that hosted the events that provided work for the city's tango orchestras were forced to close their doors. Without their busy schedules, it became more and more difficult for large tango ensembles to stay afloat. As a consequence, orchestras began to rapidly vanish. In addition to the gradual disappearance of the emblematic *orquestas típicas*, tango's decline was furthered by a marked change in the demographic landscape of the Argentine capital. In the 1940s, with the rise of Juan Domingo Perón and his political doctrine, a new and increasingly powerful social actor emerged, the immigrant from the provinces (Vila 1987). The numerous immigrants that began flooding the capital came mostly from impoverished rural settings, carrying with them customs and traditions foreign to most porteños at the time.[34] This new segment of the population did not feel represented by tango, a music that "expressed the experiences of a different social group" (Vila 1987, 83). While the social composite of Buenos Aires gradually changed, *zambas* and *chacareras* (two of the most common styles within the folklore genre) began to echo in the background. It is not a coincidence that by 1950, of the total of recorded singles published, 21% fell within the tango category and 17% within folklore (Palma and Vila 1981).[35]

Tango musicians had to adapt to the new environment. The untenable orchestras of the previous decades began to be replaced by smaller ensembles that no longer played exclusively for dancers. In fact, more and more, the shrinking tango audience was one of listeners. The relationship these new ensembles established with the public was a completely different one. Those attending tango concerts were no longer active participants but engaged listeners. As expected, the music reflected these new changes. The size of the ensembles altered the interaction that existed between its members. In trios, quartets, or quintets, instrumentalists once again found space for their

[34] By the end of the 1950s it was estimated that around 1.900.000 internal migrants had moved to the nation's capital (Vila 1987).
[35] The first album that sold over one million units in Argentina is conicidentally a folklore album, Antonio Tormo's *El Rancho 'e la Cambicha.*

individuality—something that was inevitably restricted when playing as part of a section. The new configurations also gave more room for increasingly complex arrangements and compositions. This more complex writing was also intimately tied to the outstanding musicianship tango artists had developed throughout the previous decades. Although the term 'nuevo tango' is often associated with tango's best internationally known figure of the period, Astor Piazzolla, all the ensembles that emerged in the years after the end of tango's golden age have contributed to its development. Horacio Salgán's *El Quinteto Real*, the quartet of Aníbal Troilo and Roberto Grela, Eduardo Rovira's *Agrupación de Tango Moderno* are some in the long list of talents that contributed to shape the paths tango followed after the close of the grandiose years of the *orquestas típicas*.

Evidently aware of all these changes, musicians in France began to approach tango in ways that would distance them from their local predecessors. It is important to keep in mind that Astor Piazzolla had recorded his first album as a leader of a non-traditional orchestra in Paris in 1955.[36] The album was hard to find in Buenos Aires but easily available in France and other European countries — the producer actually registered the project under multiple labels in order to increase radio play rights across Europe. In France, Marcel Azzola, Toni Murena, and Emile Carrara were the first ones to explore the new paths that were opening. Azzola and Murena rapidly formed a bandoneon duo; interestingly, in the two albums they recorded, the musicians appear under pseudonyms—Moraschini (Azzola) and Spagnoli (Murena). As expected, most of these musicians had been actively involved in the local tango scene in the 1930s; Murena, for example, had played in the orchestras of Rafael Canaro and Eduardo Bianco. It was during his time with the orchestras of Canaro and Bianco that Murena, originally an accordionist, began to play the bandoneon, something that numerous colleagues did in order to get closer to the sound of the Argentine tango. Despite coming from the same family of aerophones, the instruments have noticeably different timbres and most important, very dissimilar reaction time when it comes to sound production, something that prevents accordionists from producing the sharp attacks bandonen players can easily articulate.[37]

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[36] In 1953 Piazzolla won the Fabien Sevitzky prize with his symphonic piece in three movements, *Buenos Aires* and obtained a scholarship from the French Government to travel to Paris and study with Nadia Boulanger; he arrived to Paris in December 1954. After his work with Boulanger, Piazzolla remained in Paris where he signed a contract to record the compositions included on the album *Sinfonia en Tangos*. After the Parisian experience, Piazzolla returned to Buenos Aires and formed his *Octeto Buenos Aires*, the first in a series of groups that would come to revolutionize the genre.

[37] It order to simplify accordionists' transition to the bandoneon, in 1925/6, French luthier Charles Péguri created an "unisonoric" instrument based mechanically on a 142 voice "bisonoric" bandoneon. Unlike those instruments used by tango players in Argentine, the ill-named diatonic bandoneon sounds the same note when its bellow is pushed or pulled.

Azzola, Murena, and Carrara were just some of the numerous artists that kept tango alive in Paris throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s; and it was certainly alive. In a letter Astor Piazzolla wrote to his friend José Gobello soon after the composer's arrival in Paris in 1955 he wrote, "it is hard to believe that so many people here dance tango and how passionate they are about it, not just the old tango, but the also the new one. Particular interest exists in the orchestras of Troilo, Salgán, Francini-Pontier, etc." (quoted in Zalko 2001, 289).[38] It is again in the meticulously researched work of Nardo Zalko that we find a detailed account of the numerous ensembles and artists working during this period. The author highlights the performances of the orchestras of Primo Corchia, José Lucchesi, Jaques Morino, Roger David, René Peseti, Ángelo Burli, Tani Scala (listen to track 31 on the CD), among many others. Zalko also brings our attention to the work of numerous soloists; Azzola, Murena, and Carrara are joined by other singular accordionists that transitioned to the bandoneon, musicians like Primo Corchia, Paul Chalier, Tonin Troupel, and more recently Olivier Manoury.

Many of the artists active during those decades could still be seen performing in a television show that aired on the French station channel France 3 in the late 1990s and 2000s, *Chance aux Chansons*. The show featured performances from Argentine guests, mostly singers, but by and large those showcased were local musicians whose glory days dated back to the 60s. The show aired every weekday afternoon, from 2 to 4 pm, a timeslot that indicates that the target audience was an older crowd who would have listened to tango and Bal-musette in their younger years. The Lawrence Welk show played a similar role in the Canadian/U.S. American context.

In the years that followed tango's post-war resurgence, Paris, the city whose inhabitants had embraced tango, the same city from which distinctively local variants of the genre had evolved, would come to host two events of significant importance in the overall history of the genre. The first one is tied to the figure of Astor Piazzolla: the Parisian recording of his 1955 *Sinfonía en Tangos* (mentioned above). The second was the Parisian premier of the show *Tango Argentino*. Created by Claudio Segovia and Hector Orezzoli for the *Festival d'Automme de Paris* the musical opened at the city's Théâtre du Châtelet on November 13th, 1983. Numerous doubts lurked around the future of what New York Times critic Samuel Freedman would later call "the improbable hit" (*New York Times,* December 19th, 1985). During an interview published in the Buenos Aires's journal *La Nación*

[38] "Parece mentira ver en Paris bailar tanto el tango, y como gusta, no solamente el tango pasado, sino los nuevos tangos. Interesan sobremanera las orquestas de Troilo, Salgán, Francini–Pontier, etc."

under the title *Claudio Segovia: El señor del tango*, Segovia remembered that before the opening only 250 tickets were sold in a theater of 2500 seats. In desperation, producers and directors started inviting local friends and acquaintances to the show. Fortunately, Segovia recalled, the press had devoted several pages to the show before the opening night and by the time the curtain rose, the room was overflowing with people (*La Nación*, August 31st, 2003).

The extraordinary international response that followed the show's success in Paris and on Broadway put tango back at the centre of the world stage and gave initial momentum to a period of international popularity that has extended to current times. According to Freeman, that evening of tango song and dance not only became the unlikeliest hit of the season, it "also inspired a popular culture craze unmatched by any Broadway show since "The Boy Friend"" (*New York Times,* December 19th, 1985).

Tango in the 1980s and beyond

"Sorry, not the music your parents danced to…"

As shown above, Paris enjoyed a longstanding relationship with tango that led to its gradual entrenchment in the local culture. What remains to be determined is how this history relates to the emergence of the scene that began to take shape in the early 1980s. Given the aesthetic differences that exist between the tangos heard in Paris before the 1970s and the novel expressions that began emerging during the late 1970s, these two periods seem best not approached as part of a somewhat unified historical continuum. When assessing the possible influences and associations that could exist between recent developments and previous stages of tango activity in the French capital, however, direct relationships cannot be so easily established or discarded.

From a musical perspective, a direct connection between what began to take place in the late 1970s and previous local tango expressions is difficult to establish. Several factors contribute to this. First, most of the artists that gave initial momentum to the recent resurgence were born and raised in Argentina. They had little to no connection with Paris and its cultural life before their arrival in the city in the 1970s. Although most of them knew about the longstanding relationship Parisians had maintained with tango, none of the particularities of this history directly informed their personal or professional developments; over time, the work of these artists showed a diversity of influences and

aesthetic conceptualizations, but it remained clear that their understandings of the genre was firmly anchored on the Argentine tradition.

Second, in contrast to what was taking place in Buenos Aires, most of the expressions that kept the Argentine tradition alive in Paris throughout the 1960s and 1970s were conceived primarily for the dance floor. This was a period where tango was considered "la dance par excellence" in the French capital (Jacocot 2008). As mentioned, some artists approached tango as an autonomous form and aimed to an audience of listeners. Those, however, outnumbered these expressions, where dancers played a central role. The music for the milonga needs to be maintained within the parameters expected by those dancing to it, a situation that often hindered the kind of musical experimentation that would have appealed to the artists active at end of the 1970s.

The third and most significant reason for the complicated linking between the music of the Parisian tango scene pre 1970s and more recent expressions is the nature of the relationship most members of the younger generation of tango musicians have established with the genre. Most of the younger members of the tango scene I talked to pointed to the figure of Astor Piazzolla as their first path to tango. In some instances, Piazzolla remained the oldest point of reference in their experience with tango. This was the case with Ivo De Greef, the pianist of Alejandro Schwarz's *Quinteto El Después*. His first contact with tango was through Piazzolla's "Italian recordings."[39] "I was amazed, mainly by the bandoneon. Arrangement wise is not the most successful but his playing is great, his solos are amazing. Is very 70s but gorgeous…" (De Greef, communication with the author, April 19th, 2011). Piazzolla was also the point of entry to tango for Finnish musician Ville Hiltula. During his time at the Sibelius-Academy in Helsinki as a classical accordionist, Hiltula formed a group devoted entirely to the music of Piazzolla. Interestingly, it was not until he switched to the bandoneon years later that he began to explore Finland's longstanding tango tradition (communication with the author, December 3rd, 2010). The situation was similar for Margaux, a 22-year-old I met at one of the concerts Tomas Gubitsch played during the seven months I spent in Paris. During a conversation prior to a second concert Tomas played a few weeks later, she explained that Piazzolla was the first tango artist she ever heard. She emphasized how much she loved the music but she made it very clear that she did not feel the desire to engage with older expressions of tango. Although I encountered others for whom Piazzolla stood as sole point of reference when it came to tango, this perspective was not common, even less so when dealing with

[39] The term "Italian recording" point to a series of recordings Piazzolla did while living in Rome in the mid-1970s.

musicians. As was the case with Ivo De Greef and Ville Hiltula, for many young musicians, Piazzolla often acted as a first step into what would, with time, become a much richer relationship with tango.[40] Motivated by their desire to learn more about the intricacies of the genre Piazzolla had revolutionized, musicians engage on a personal exploration through the work of the old masters. In fact, transcription and imitation are still the two main pedagogical tools in the teaching and transmission of tango. As one would expect, however, in their research through tango's past almost all musicians find themselves engaged with the sounds of the Argentine orchestras, not the French ones.

The relationship members of previous generations of Parisians established with older expressions of tango are considerably different. During a conversation I had with Alfonso Pacin, an Argentine composer and multi-instrumentalist who has been residing in Paris since the 1990s, he brought it to my attention that "tango is something they [Parisians] consider theirs. Even those who know nothing about tango commonly tie it to the world of the *vals mussete* — they may not even know that it is Argentine" (Pacin, interview with the author, January 18, 2011).[41] Throughout the various interviews or informal talks I had with local people both within and outside the local tango community, I became increasingly aware of this sense of ownership Pacin had suggested. The perception most of the individuals I spoke with had formed of tango was primarily the result of their personal connection with local expressions they themselves had engaged with or had seen others listening or dancing to in previous decades. In most cases, the local expressions that had shaped their experiences and ideas about tango were those tangos Zalko called "*afrancesados*" (French-sounding), tangos characterized by a considerably less energetic rhythmic drive and song-like textures. Given this background, I was not surprised to hear comments suggesting a certain inability to connect with the novel tangos emerging from the local Argentine community. In some cases reactions to these recent expressions underlined issues that exceed a simple incapacity to get the new music. In reference to the work of the trio Beytelmann and Mosalini created with Patrice Caratini, Alexandra Weiland writes:

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[40] Nowadays the perception has shifted slightly from what it used to be. Piazzolla is no longer seen as an isolated genius but another pioneer in the historical continuum of tango. The process of research and discovery that young Argentine artists have engaged with since the 1990s has markedly increased the respect and appreciation for the contribution of other seminal figures like Horacio Salgán, Osvaldo Pugliese, Leopoldo Federico, Emilio Balcarce and numerous others. This change in perception has been further consolidated by the work students are asked to do in the many institutions where tango is taught. I have had the opportunity to confirm this throughout the numerous conversations with musicians and students in France, Argentina, the Netherlands, and the USA.

[41] El tango es una música que les pertenece… La gente que no sabe nada de tango dice "ah, tango," pertenece al mundo de *vals musete* – pueden ni saber que el tango es Argentino.

> They play modern tango. One can hear in the background the old tango of the beginning of the century, but the music has lost its essence and has *degenerated* into forms no longer having substantial rapport with that old tango. Cutting ties with Argentina, Paris practically loses the tango that, we can't deny it, influences the dance (italics are mine, Weiland 1996, 51).[42]

Given her Australian background and age (Weiland was born in 1968), the author is unable to fully relate to the experiences described by those Parisian individuals I had the opportunity to speak to. At the same time, Weiland's perception is in many respects similar to that of many among the older generation and dance community I had the opportunity to talk to.

Based on ideas of loss and degeneration, Weiland establishes a seemingly clear division between the local tango traditions (music for dancers, according to Weiland) and some of the expressions that began to emerge during the early 1980s (contrary to what she suggests, the analysis that will be presented in Chapter 6 shows that the music of Mosalini and Beytelmann is firmly rooted in the 'essence' of the Argentine tango tradition.) What it is important to underline here is that there was a seemingly unbridgeable gap between the expressions most people associate with Parisian tango and those musics that gave initial momentum to the genre's resurgence in the late 1970s. According to Chilean tango aficionado and collector Helio Torres, by 1974, when he arrived to Paris as an exile, very little of the so-called French tango could still be heard; "almost nothing was left" were his very own words (Torres, interview with the author, February 2nd, 2011). Four decades after Torres arrival, tango is very much alive in Paris. The following chapter looks at some of the conditions that made Paris, and France in general, a fertile ground for the emergence and development of a vibrant tango scene.

[42] "Ils font un tango moderne. Il existe aussi le vieux fond tango di début du siècle, mais la music a perdu de son essence pour « dégénérer » dans des formes musicales qui n'ont plus grand rapport avec ce vieux tango. En rupture avec l'Argentine, Paris perd quasiment la musique tango qui (on ne peut le nier) influence la danse."

Chapter 3

Welcoming sociocultural context, favourable institutional infrastructure, and an appreciative audience

The relationship Parisians developed with tango throughout the various stages of the genre's local history provides one perspective on the overall history of tango in Paris. In order to better understand the circumstances informing the emergence and development of the more recent period of tango artistry this chapter will turn to several other aspects: 1) the sociopolitical situation Argentine exiles found in Paris at the end of the 1970s; 2) the expectations and support of local audiences; 3) France's cultural infrastructure; 4) and some of its government's cultural policies.

Sociopolitical sympathies

When Gustavo Beytelmann arrived in Paris in October of 1976,[1] no signs of the destruction that accompanied the student revolts that had paralyzed the city a decade earlier could be seen in the streets. Much of the spirit of the movement that gained momentum under slogans such as *L'Imagination au pouvoir* (power to the imagination) or *Il est interdit d'interdire* (it is forbidden to forbid), however, still lingered in the hearts of most of the city's younger generations. Numerous analysts have agreed that the political consequences of the revolts of May 1968 empowered the younger generation at the centre of the movement and allowed them to reinforce the perception of themselves as a "*force contestataire*" (contestatory force), with no need to conform, and capable of initiating decisive changes (Bantigny 2008). Many of the ideals that lingered in the common collective of segments of the French society after the revolts were in line with the principles that gave momentum to some of the leftist political movements spreading all across South America. Based on these fundamental ideological similarities many in France developed a strong sympathy for the Latin American cause. This desire for a larger sense of social responsibility was clearly expressed

[1] For a more detailed examination of the aftermath of the historical protests and their long-term consequences see Kristin Ross's *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (2004), Daniel Singer's *Prelude to revolution: France in May 1968* (2003) or Jacques Tarnero's *Mai 68: La révolution fiction* (1998).

in one of the numerous slogans that decorated the walls of Paris during the May 68 revolts and would, over time, come to symbolize the ideals of the period: *Cela nous concerne tous* (this concerns us all). It is important to note that Argentina was only one of the numerous countries in South America under increasingly violent military regimes at the time. The music Latin-American artists brought with them to Paris soon became part of the city's soundscape. In April 1981, music commentator Philippe Pelaprat began a short review of the music of the Gubitsch/Calo duo underlining this particular point. In his words, "[t]he musics of Latin America have, after a long time, crossed the oceans and secured a significant place in the multitude of melodies seeking our ears daily" (*Antennes*, April 7, 1981).[2] A phrase Chilean composer and member of the famous group *Quilapayún*, Patricio Wang, shared during a conversation we had at a Parisian café presents a very graphic description of the situation at the time; during the 1970s and early 1980s, Wang said, "Paris was the capital of South America" (Wang, interview with the author, December 10th, 2010).

How did this apparent change in the collective consciousness of Paris' society affect the growing community of Latin American exiles? According to most of the testimonies I gathered among those who arrived in the city in the late 1970s, there was a palpable interest and sympathy among students, intellectuals, and the working classes for the Latin American situation. This sentiment materialized into a general predisposition to engage with the community and, if possible, help its members. It also translated into a general interest for the messages of the numerous artists amongst the community of political exiles. According to Osvaldo Calo, "there was a desire to listen to musics coming from Latin America" (Calo, interview with the author, April 22nd, 2011).[3] In an interview with Christophe Apprill, Juan Cedrón, an Argentine tango singer and guitarist who moved to Paris in the early 1970s, described the situation with the following words,

> It was during the years 1971 and 1972 that we began playing here [Paris], it was close to the events of May 1968, and there was a "1968 audience" that I really liked. They discovered the quartet in view of our ideological and political side, our position vis-à-vis the political problems that were taking place in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, and Brazil. We criticized all that: we sang a song about a massacre that took place in

[2] "Les musiques d'Amérique latine ont depuis longtemps franchi les océans pour venir tenir une place non négligeable dans la multitude des mélodies qui sollicitent nos Oreilles quotidiennement."
[3] "Había un deseo generalizado de escuchar musicas de America Latina."

> Buenos Aires in 1972. There was a public you could call leftist…People do not like the traditional tango! (Apprill 2009)[4]

The attitude many Parisians displayed towards the music brought by the Chilean exiles that arrived escaping the violence that ensued as a result of the coup d'état of September 11th 1973 was similar. "Chilean music had an important success and opened the ears to the whole mass of people from May '68 that were avid to hear those kinds of messages here" (Pacin, interview with the author, January 18th, 2011).[5] In short, the increased sense of social responsibility, political participation, and the associated sympathy for those suffering political persecution that lingered as an aftermath of the May '68 movement played an important role during the early stages of the careers of the numerous Latin American artists that arrived in Paris throughout the 1970s.

It is also important to remember that the communist party had a very important presence in the communes around Paris at the time, a point brought to my attention also by Pacin. The administrations of those communes were particularly sensitive to the cause of those involved in the many political struggles taking place in South America in the decades following the Cuban revolution. Political exiles received considerable assistance upon their arrival in these communes. They were helped with some of the difficulties inherent to the process of resettling into a new city (e.g., immigration, housing, jobs, documentation).[6] Although these arrangements would not have had any direct effect on the music events under examination here, they certainly eased what was undoubtedly a traumatic transition and perhaps by doing simply so, indirectly influenced, in some way or form, artists' creative output.

Artistic liberty

[4] "C'est dans les années 72, 71 que nous avons commencé à jouer ici, c'était tout près de mai 1968, il y avait un public soixante huitard, que j'aime beaucoup; ils ont découvert le Cuarteto par rapport au côté idéologique et politique, notre position vis à vis des problèmes politiques qui se sont passés en Argentine, en Uruguay, au Paraguay, au Chili, au Brésil. On critiquait tout ça : on chant des chansons d'une tuerie qui a eu lieu à Buenos Aires en 1972. Il y avait un public dit de gauche, pour simplifier les choses. Le phénomène, c'est que je voulais aussi chanter un tango traditionnel, Bahia Blanca. On finissait (tape trois fois sèchement dans ses mains). Les gens n'aimaient pas le tango traditionnel!"

[5] "La música Chilena tuvo un boom cultural muy importante y le abrió el oído a toda esa masa de gente de mayo 68 que estaba ávida de encontrar ese discurso acá."

[6] According to Marina Franco, between 1974 and 1983 around 3,000 Argentine exiles arrived in France escaping political persecution (mostly in Paris and its surroundings). About 900 of these exiles received refugee status granted by the OFPRA (*Office Français des Refugiés et Apatrides*) (Franco 2004).

I have suggested that the sociopolitical situation in France had a marked impact on the artists whose work was about to give initial momentum of the most recent period of tango activity in Paris. Both the circumstances described to me during many of the conversations I had with Argentine expatriates as well as the numerous accounts I had the opportunity to read in published interviews and books such as Jorge Fondebrider's *La Paris de los Argentinos*, supports this. The impact I'm referring to, however, was not a direct consequence of the sociopolitical situation Argentine exiles encountered upon their arrival to France per se. Although one can assume that the particularities of the new context would have certainly affected the newcomers in various ways, the brunt of the transition was primarily a result of the marked contrast that existed between the reality that welcomed them in Europe and the circumstances they had left behind in their home country.

The contrast between the two contexts could not have been more dramatic. It is extremely difficult to imagine the numerous ways in which such a drastic change can affect a person. Even moreso when we take into consideration that, in most cases, these individuals were forced to leave all behind: belongings, loved ones, jobs. The implications of transitioning between such dissimilar realities also have a profound impact on artistic production. In this case the possible consequences associated with moving from a context ruled by censorship and oppression to one where physical and intellectual liberties were secure and one's condition as an artist does not bring mistrust but certain inherent prestige and appreciation can be notable.

During a conversation with Juan José Mosalini, journalist Mauricio Ciechanower asked the bandoneon player about the experience of playing tango abroad, in exile. Although short, Mosalini's response was a complex one. "We do tango fourteen thousand kilometers away, but it's as if we would have made it in Buenos Aires, with one difference: as if we would have made it in Buenos Aires if we had had the framework of liberty of expression we went to find abroad" (Ciechanower 1985, 50).[7] Mosalini's answer can be approached from a number of perspectives, all enlightening in their own way—the view that despite the change in context and all its inherent implications these musicians continued to do tango as they did it in Buenos Aires is one that deserves careful examination (this will be brought up in chapter 4). At this time, however, I want to focus on the framework of liberty underscored by the bandoneon player.

[7] "Nosotros hacemos tango a 14 mil kilómetros de distancia, pero es como si lo hubiéremos hecho en Buenos Aires, con una diferencia: como si lo hubiéramos hecho en Buenos Aires si hubiéramos tenido el marco de libertad de expresión que fuimos a buscar afuera."

First, it is important to note that Mosalini points to the need for liberty of expression as one of the motivations behind their departure from Argentina; it was, as he stated it, what they "went to find abroad." It is also significant that he blames this lack of freedom for the impossibility to create as he considers they would have been able to if the situation in Argentina had been different. In short, in their Parisian exile, Argentine artists like Cedrón, Mosalini or Beytlemann not only found a context in which the civil liberties the military had drastically curtailed in their home country were once again guaranteed; they also encountered a place where artistic inquietudes that had remained concealed could be freely explored. In reference to the decision Tomas Gubitsch and Osvaldo Calo made to stay in France once their engagement with Astor Piazzolla's ensemble was over, music journalist Rémy Kolpa Kopoul wrote, "the two young Argentines chose to regain their freedom. The simple freedom to play and create that had been severely compromised since 1974 by starry-cap-Videla's seizure of power" (*Libération*, January 27, 1981).[8]

In Paris, exiled Argentine artists were able to do things musically that would have been unthinkable in their home country. In 1979, Juan José Mosalini entered Normandy's Fremontel Studio for the third time in his life; on this occasion, he was alone. Mosalini was about to record the tracks for *Don Bandoneon* (one of the pieces recorded for the album can be heard on track 31 on the CD), his first album entirely comprised of tango arrangements for solo bandoneon (in 1991 he recorded *Che Bandoneon*, his second album of arrangements for solo bandoneon). When I asked him about the circumstances leading to the project he underscored that it was something that would have been impossible to do in Argentina. "Any bandoneon player had a small repertoire of arrangements for solo bandoneon, your own or someone else's arrangements... but nobody cared, making an album with this material in Argentina...? Impossible." (Mosalini, interview with the author, April 29, 2011).[9] At the onset, the people at Hexagon—the same label behind the production *Lagrima* and *Tango Rojo*[10]—were not fully convinced about the idea of a solo project. What the people at Hexagon initially had in mind was an album with the bandoneon in a "leading role" (Mosalini, interview with

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[8] "Les deux jeunes Argentins ont choisi de reprendre leur liberté. La simple liberté de jouer, de créer, fortement compromise depuis 74 et la prise du pouvoir par Videla-la-casquette-étoilée." Videla's seize of power did not take place in 1974 as Rémy Kolpa Kopoul suggests. As previously noted, the Military Junta lead by Videla took over the government on March 24th of 1976. Kolpa Kopoul refers to the government lead by Isabel Martínez de Perón, Juan Domingo Perón's third wife. After her husband's death, Isabel assumed as the 41st president of Argentina. Although democratic in theory, political persecutions, disappearances, and murders began during her presidency.

[9] "Cualquier bandoneonísta tenia un repertorio mínimo de arreglos para bandoneon solo propios o de otro…Era corriente pero nadie te daba bola, grabar un disco con ese material en la Argentina… imposible."

[10] *Lagrima*, *Tango Rojo* and *Don Bandoneon* also shared the same producer, Jacques Subileau, and sound engineer, Bruno Menny.

the author, April 29, 2011) but, as Mosalini put it, he "sold them" the solo venture. During my conversation with Juan José, it became clear that this initial apprehension was not a matter of aesthetic principles per se, but a result of the not-uncommon ignorance that existed around the sonic possibilities of an instrument that was not all that well known outside tango circles.

Hexagon's executives did not consider the label a charity organization; like any other player in the record industry, they were after financial gains. That, however, was something they knew from the onset would be a very unlikely outcome of their engagement with ensembles like *Tiempo Argentino* or projects like *Don Bandoneon*. At the same time, as Mosalini noted, "it was a label with an artistic curiosity"(Mosalini, interview with the author, April 29, 2011).[11] The label's highly profitable work with some well-known local artists allowed them the necessary financial leeway to fund projects they knew would not do well from a monetary perspective.[12] When they first heard *Tiempo Argentino*, Mosalini joked, their response was, "not even aunts will buy this stuff" (Mosalini, interview with the author, April 29, 2011).[13] Regardless, the label backed the venture, something not many producers in Buenos Aires would have done or could have afforded. Christian and Alan Courtis' account of the circumstances behind the dissolution of Rodolfo Alchourrón's ensemble prior to the musician's departure to the U.S. in the late 1970s presents a good depiction of the situation in Argentina at the time.[14] According to them,"[t]he instability of the local context and the difficulty which implied divulging a project which lacked a commercial orientation provoked on that same year [1974] the dismembering on the band" (Christian and Alan Courtis 2008).

A different kind of audience

For a long time the process of music production has often been conceived as an unidirectional one, with listeners standing at what could be described as the end of the process initiated by the conjoint efforts of artists and producers. In the last decades, however, the view of musical performances as unidirectional systems of communication running, as Christopher Small put it, from "composer to individual listener through the medium of the performer" (Small 1998, 6), has

[11] "Era un sello con una inquietud artística."
[12] I have not been able to establish how many copies of *Don Bandoneon* were sold. During our conversation Mosalini did confirm that the album did not do "that well" in sales.
[13] "Cuando escucharon *Tiempo Argentino* la respuesta fue, "esto no se lo vendemos ni a tres tías.""
[14] Born in Buenos Aires, Rodolfo Alchourrón was a guitarist, arranger, composer, and pedagogue. He is recognized as a referent of the musical renovations that took place in Argentina during the 1970s.

drawn our attention to the active roles audiences play in the process of music making (Frith 1983, Middleton 1990, Negus 1996, Small 1998). The agency of the audience has taken many forms in the processes shaping the interaction between the Argentine artists giving impetus to the numerous tango-related projects that emerged throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s in Paris. Concertgoers and record buyers provided newcomers with an income, an unquestionably modest income that in most cases had to be supplemented with other activities (e.g., other gigs, recordings, teaching, etc.), but an income nonetheless. The French public also provided some of the first groups created by the recently arrived exiles a sort of *raison d'etre*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, most of the initial groups formed by musicians like Cedrón, Mosalin, Beytelmann, and Gubitsch took a politically charged stance upon their arrival to the French capital; it was not only about the music. Awful things were taking place in Argentina and they felt that they had a responsibility to denounce them. As described earlier, some of the song titles of *Tiempo Argentino's* first album, suggestively named *Tango Rojo*, are a clear example of this: "*Violento*" (Violent), "*Tango Rojo*" (Red Tango), "*Pesada*" (Heavy-during the time of the repression the term La Pesada was used in reference to the military forces that acted clandestinely. This was due to their brutality), "*Lejos"* (Far/At the distance), "*Raíces"* (Roots). The song "*Lejos*" (listen to track 32 on the CD) clearly shows the intention of vindicating the cause of those being persecuted in Argentina while denouncing the illegality of the military's actions.

Lejos
Music: Gustavo Beytelmann
Lyrics: Néstor Gabetta

Estarán los mismos pastos y arroyos
y el acero de las vías muertas
que los sintió pasar cuando la fuga.
Estarán las bocacalles tapadas de corazones
que en los barrios supieron encontrar
el puesto y el lugar
que le asigno la lucha y sus honores.
Nada dirán los temerosos que cedieron al
principio al camino fácil
nada dirán lo que sintieron quemaduras
en la carne cuando ya tenían claro
a los culpables.
Estarán los mas maduros desnudos en el polvo
con las manos que tendrán que cansar
cuando haya que seguir
sembrando de coraje los escombros.
Estarán los hijos de una tarde
tan dulce, que el viento mensajero
volverá canciones al pasado
el sueño que vive y esta entero.
Estará el silencio victorioso
del ultimo muerto y el primero,
perfumado el aire en un revuelo
mas puro que ningún monumento.
Y allí estarán los que lo hicieron
con ojos y dientes apretados.

Far/At the distance
Music: Gustavo Beytelmann
Lyrics: Néstor Gabetta

The same pasture and streams will be there
and the steel of the dead railroads
that felt them passing during their escape.
Intersections will be covered in hearts
that neighborhoods knew how to find
the position and the place
assigned by the fight and its honors.
Nothing will say the fearful that yielded to the
principle of the easy road
nothing will say those who felt the burns
in the flesh when they already knew who
the culprits were.
The more mature will be naked in the dust
with the hands that will tire
when the time comes to continue
seeding debris with courage.
The children of an evening will be present
so sweet, that the messenger wind
will take songs to the past
the dream that lives and remains one.
The victorious silence will be there
from the last dead and the first,
perfuming the air in a flurry
purer than any other monument.
And there will be those who made it
with eye and teeth clenched

Even when the purely instrumental nature of the ensemble prevented the performance of texts, artists found alternative means to "voice" their concerns. In *Resistiendo la Tormenta* (Resisting/withstanding the Storm; listen to track 33 on the CD), the first album that the duo Tomas Gubitsch created with pianist Osvaldo Calo after the dissolution of *Tiempo Argentino*, the musicians refer to composition titles and included texts on the album's back cover to express their message of loss, support, and defiance. His music [Gubitsch's], noted music critique Daniel Cresson, "does not want to stay neutral: it speaks of repression, torture, fascism, and also hope" (*Le Monde de la Musique*, February 31, 1981).[15]

In a sense, the members of these ensembles saw the local audience as a group of socially conscious individuals who needed to be informed of the courageous resistance of the compatriots and the inhumane conditions imposed by the military authorities in Argentine. The goal, however, was not only to "educate" locals about the situation in Argentina. Many among the audiences these ensembles encountered in each of their performances were French citizens with various degrees of knowledge about what was taking place across the Atlantic. From the perspective of the artists on stage, these individuals were not only sympathetic listeners but also citizens with a constitutional right to demand their local authorities to publicly condemn the actions of the Argentine de facto government. As mentioned in chapter one, ensembles like *Tiempo Argentino* played a fundamental role in the political agenda of political organizations like the PRT. For such organizations, in audiences around the world lay the possibility to mount international pressure against general Jorge Rafael Videla and his military regime. This perception was not unique to those affiliated in one way or another to political organizations like the PRT. Even artists that had chosen to maintain certain distance from any of the various organized leftist movements acting in Argentina (e.g., PRT-ERP, *Montoneros*, FRIP (*Frente Revolucionario Indoamericano y Popular*/Popular Indoamerican Revolutionary Front), the Communist Party, etc.) worked, on and off stage, to denounce the crimes of the Argentine Junta and hopefully, increase international condemnation. The music of *Tiempo Argentino* or the Gubistch/Calo duo materialized the sentiments of many within the Parisian community of Argentine exiles. Inversely, some within the ensembles perceived the local audience as a possible conduit for a message they wanted to deliver.

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[15] "Sa musique ne veut pas être neutre: elle dit la répression, la torture, le fascisme et aussi l'espoir."

It was perhaps in the overall artistic development of these musicians where the influence of the local audience was most salient. When I asked about their views on the local pubic, almost all the musicians I had the opportunity to talk to used terms like receptive, open, and curious. Gustavo Beytelmann underscored the latter in his description of the local audience as one in "constant search for novelty" (Beytelmann, interview with the author, January 29, 2011). While one cannot link these references to ethereal senses of openness and curiosity to particular music elements or compositional conceptualizations, it is not hard to speculate about some of the effects the overall atmosphere created by the possible perception of a receptive audience of novelty seekers would have had on the artists' psyches. It is important to keep in mind that almost all the work produced by the musicians at the centre of this dissertation was the product of artistic inquietudes shaped by similar interests in musical dialogues, crossings of traditional boundaries, and sonic entanglements. As noted in the previous chapters, the atmosphere in Buenos Aires during the 1970s and early 1980s was not one that fostered the kind of artistic curiosities shared by many of the artists currently living in Pairs. It is true that for many artists the Argentine reality during that period acted as a powerful stimulant that shaped their voices and the tone of their messages. The late Luis Alberto Spinetta[16] put it very clearly when he said that, "the fight against the injustices of the torturers is something permanent in the history of Argentina. If that enemy had not existed, rock would not have the basis for its existence" (the phrase was printed on one of the walls of Argentina's National Library during an exhibit devoted to Spinetta soon after his death in February 2012).[17]

Something similar can be said about the various expressions commonly grouped under the label of *música popular* (popular music). As previously noted, social commentary is one of the main characteristics of song writing in the *música popular* genre. As expected, the situation of the country at the time gave artists within the tradition plenty of material to work with. The situation was markedly different for artists working with less popular genres. Traditional tango was no longer the genre that dictated the pulse of Buenos Aires; only the tiny number of orchestras that managed to survive into the 1970s kept the music alive (i.e., Osvaldo Pugliese's, Leopoldo Federico's, Baffa-Berlingieri's, Atilio Stampone's). The emergent *Tango Nuevo* remained music consumed almost exclusively by the

[16] Luis Alberto Spinetta is considered one of the most influential rock musicians of South America. He was an insightful songwriter, skilled guitarist, and talented composer regarded as one of the fathers of Argentina's rock national movement.

[17] "La lucha contra la injusticia de los torturadores es algo permanente en la historia Argentina. Si no existiera ese enemigo, el rock no tendría la base de su existencia."

same audience of intellectuals and musicians that followed jazz. Even smaller was the interest behind contemporary concert music. The problem, however, was not the size of these communities or the lack of artists sharing the interest to cross stylistic boundaries. The work of Juan José Mosalini, Daniel Binelli, Rodolfo Mederos, Rodolfo Alchourron, Waldo de Los Ríos, Eduardo Lagos, and El Chango Farías Gómez among numerous others evidences the existence of a sizable group of artists trying to weave bridges between various Argentine and foreign traditions. The problem resided in the lack of space, physical, institutional, and intellectual, that existed for musicians within highly compartmentalized camps to interact and collaborate. In Paris, in contrast, some of these artists found an atmosphere they felt welcomed and even encouraged their explorations.

There is a final point to be underlined here. The receptiveness displayed by the French public towards the various tango-related expressions emerging from the Argentine expatriate community is intimately tied to the nature of the relationship the Parisian audience had with traditional tango at the time. As mentioned above, many in France considered tango as a local tradition. The kind of tango that certain segments of the local population came to treasure as their own, however, shared little with the expressions informing the music of most of the ensembles that began to emerge in the 1980s.

Infrastructure and funding

The infrastructure of France's cultural apparatus has also helped considerably in the development of the numerous projects Argentine expatriates have created around tango since the late 1970s. In Ursula Broschke Davis' book *Paris Without Regret*, US American trumpeter Donald Byrd talks about how certain aspects of France's cultural infrastructure contributed to his professional development. According to the U.S. American artist, in the late 1960s, the possibility of recording one's own compositions for big band in a professional studio depended on one's stature. "It was impossible to go to a studio in the United States and record one's compositions… It was too expensive," claimed Byrd. The situation was different in France where, "musicians could go into the studio of a radio or television station as guest soloist, and the studio orchestra would play the music he had written. The musicians could take home the tape of his music to demonstrate that he could write for big bands" (Broschke Davis 1986, 108). The situation was considerably different for the Argentine artists that began arriving to France in the late 1970s. Most important, realizing their

music conceptualizations (either in live setting or recordings) did not depend on having an established ensemble of around sixteen members at their disposal.[18] There were, however, other ways in which the scaffoldings of France's cultural apparatus helped them.

Today the relationships artists establish with their listeners often begin at a distance, mediated primarily by recordings and Internet downloads. These long-distance relationships are even frequent between musicians and listeners that live in the same city. Technology, financial issues, time constrains, lack of available and affordable venues, and oversaturated markets are all issues that have reshaped the nature of the artist/audience dynamic. For the artists working with increasingly flexible conceptualizations of tango in Paris during the early 1980s, the situation was radically different. Building and maintaining a relationship with the local audience depended primarily on unmediated live performances.[19]Although recordings, in the form of the LP, played an important part in consolidating the artist/audience relationship, live ventures were crucial. It is here that the infrastructure of the Parisian music scene played an important role in advancing the careers of many of Argentine musicians.

Paris had numerous venues that musicians could access with a certain facility. The last conversation I had with Tomas Gubitsch before my departure from Paris took place at a cafe located in the 1st arrondissement, not far from the *Centre Pompidou*. During our conversation, Tomas pointed out that we were just in the neighborhood where he and Osvaldo were back in the 1980s. The difference, he noted, "is that when we started…there were five places in the neighbourhood where you could play. Not only you could play, you played for two weeks at a time" (Gubitsch, interview with the author, April 7, 2011).[20] That was no longer the situation in 2011. Access to performance venues not only affected the kind of relationship musicians were able to maintain with the local audience, it also had a marked effect in the way musicians related with their own art. In reference to the possibility of playing every night for the span of two weeks, Gubitsch underscored,

> Playing often has nothing to do with regular rehearsing. You can rehearse fifty times with the best musicians in the world but it does not get even

[18] I'm considering here big band's common instrumentation: five saxophones (two altos, two tenors, and a baritone), four trombones (three tenors and a bass), four trumpets, piano, double bass, and drums.
[19] Performances are always mediated. Amplification, instruments, artistic personas are all elements to be considered when dealing with mediated performances. Here I'm simply pointing to the audience's ability to experience the music live, not reproduced.
[20] "Estamos justo en el barrio en el que empezamos. Con la diferencia que cuando empezamos con Osvaldo en el 80, en este barrio había cinco lugares donde podías tocar, y no solo donde podías tocar sino que tocabas por dos semanas."

> close to playing a week straight in one place. After a week you get rid of the parts, no one looks at them anymore; you go onstage and make music. There are no worries, you begin to make music and everything sounds different. It is true that groups back then sounded differently due to the fact that they played very often...Today, it's terrible to admit it, but you get together with musicians who are able to do one rehearsal and a half and make a decent concert. That is not the same as making music together. Making music together is closer to the perspective of a chamber group, a quartet, with which you work for 10 years, perform often, and play the same pieces seven thousand times...you play with ease, you are immersed in the whole thing! All this is very detrimental to the quality of the music. (Gubitsch, interview with the author, April 7, 2011).[21]

Bars, jazz clubs, and other privately owned smaller venues were some of the places where the musicians at the centre of the local tango scene made their music available to the local public. They were also able to access, although not as frequently, performance venues at cultural institutions or various local concert halls with the financial backing of the city government or private enterprises. During the first two years following the formation of their duo, Gubistch/Calo played at places such as the *Musee d'art moderne de la ville de Paris*, *Le Grand Auditorium de la Maison de Radio France,* and L'A.T.E.M. The situation has changed considerably since the 1980s. As Tomas mentioned during our last conversation, ensembles do not play that often anymore.[22] "You came at a bad time… Paris is dead" were the words used by Andres Marsili to describe the local tango scene at the time of my arrival in Paris (Marsili, conversation with the author, January 7, 2011).[23] The number of music projects available had saturated the local market and the profitability of live ventures commonly hinges on the support of communal, governmental or private institutions. Despite this radical shift, access to the numerous venues counting governmental or communal support remains important for local performers. In April 2011, Juanjo Mosalini and Gerardo Gerez Le Cam organized a week-long tango seminar at the conservatory Erik Satie in Villebon-sur-Yvette, a small town on the outskirts of

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[21] Tocar seguido no tiene nada que ver con ensayar seguido. Podes ensayar 50 veces con los mejores músicos del mundo y no tiene nada que ver con tocar una semana seguida en un lugar. Después de una semana tiras las partes a la mierda, ya nadie las mira mas, entras y haces música… No hay preocupaciones, entra a hacer música y todo suena de otra manera. Es cierto que los grupos sonaban de otra manera por que se tocaba muy seguido… hoy en día, es terrible decirlo, pero te juntas con músicos que son capaces de hacer un ensayo y medio y hacer un concierto digno que no es lo mismo que hacer música juntos. Hacer música juntos es mucho mas la óptica de un grupo de cámara, de un cuarteto, con el cual laburas 10 años y estas tocando todo el tiempo y tocas 7000 veces las mismas piezas… las tocas de taquito, estas metido dentro de la cosa! Todo esto va muy en detrimento en la calidad de la música, claramente.

[22] My experience during my six-month-long stay in Paris confirms Gubitsch's comment. I did not have that many opportunities to hear the various projects of the musicians mentioned throughout this dissertation.

[23] Llegaste en un mal momento, Paris esta muerto.

Paris. The seminar concluded with a ninety-minute-long concert at the conservatory's MJC Boby Lapointe hall, a magnificent venue where the artists were able to stage a great sounding performance that allowed them access to new audiences despite its "student concert" setting.[24]

Also important was the interest music critics and the local media in general showed for music projects like the ones emerging from the community of Argentine expatriates. During my research, I managed to access tens of journal and magazine articles where diverse music critics reviewed the recently published albums or latest performances of groups like *Tiempo Argentino*, the Gubitch/Calo duo or the BCM trio.[25] By and large, all the authors had favorable things to say about the music and the musicians. With the exception of a few cases where the commentator did not seem able to see past the veil of exoticism in which Europeans have historically viewed forms like tango, the focus was on the originality of the music and the musicianship displayed by the performers.

According to Tomas Gubitsch, the opportunity to maintain week-long engagements in a given venue had a lot to do with the possibility of reaching those writing music columns in the local media. In three weeks, Gubitsch said in reference to the length of time of each performance arrangement, "you make yourself known in Paris. The press-guy can't make it to the concert today, tomorrow does not work either, the day after his schedule is a bit complicated…but someday you "hook him"" (Gubitsch, interview with the author, January 26, 2011).[26] In almost all the reviews and critiques I read, the public was encouraged to attend the concerts or buy the recordings.

The most important form of institutional support, however, came in the shape of financial assistance through the numerous programs the French government has instituted in the last decades. Luckily for the artists at the centre of this dissertation, the Argentine exile coincided with a period of substantive changes in France's cultural policies. A few years after Mosalini, Beytelmann, Gubitsch, Calo and many others arrived to France, the then-leader of the Socialist party, François Mitterrand, became the country's twenty-first president. As Philippe Poirrier notes in his article "French Cultural

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[24] As indicated on the hall's website (http://www.mjcvillebon.org/web/), the venue is supported by the city government (La Ville de Villebon-sur-Yvette), the departmental government (Le Conseil Général de l'Essonne), and the departmental direction of youth and sports (La Direction Départementale à la Jeunesse et aux Sports).

[25] I found many of these reviews in the archives of the national library. Most of the material I had access to, however, was obtained through the immense generosity of Osvaldo Calo. During a Sunday afternoon at his house on the outskirts of Paris he waited patiently while I examined and photographed the numerous pages of the binders where he had carefully stored newspaper clippings, brochures, media releases, and other material documenting some of the many stages of his music career.

[26] "En tres semanas te haces conocer en Paris porque el tipo de la prensa hoy no puede, mañana tampoco, pasado se me complica… pero algún día lo enganchas."

Policy in Question, 1981-2003," "[w]hen the Left came to power in 1981, a threefold break with the past occurred. The major change was the doubling of the Ministry of Culture's budget. Secondly, this change of scale was fittingly embodied in the public mind in the person of the new Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, who had the unswerving support of the President. Thirdly, the intentional linkage of culture with the economy amounted to a Copernican revolution in Socialist thinking" (Poirrier 2004, 395). Jack Lang was, in effect, the mastermind of the newly implemented policies. Lang's definition of what constituted "culture" at the time was much broader than his predecessors.' He widened the framework of the items eligible for governmental support to include a vast range of forms commonly associated with the so-called mass culture and entertainment industries that were previously excluded. "Jazz, pop music, break dancing, and cartoon strips all became worthy objects of government cultural support" (Poirrier 2004, 396).[27] In his examination of the impact of the May 1968 *événements* upon music and musical life in France, Eric Drott tells us that, "the advent of social movements seeking to protect the right and interests of both regional minorities and immigrant workers in the post-'68 period led to a heightened interest in the cultural and musical traditions of these communities" (Drott 2011, 153). While Drott does not look into the specifics of how the post May 1968 socio-political landscape affected Latin American exiles, my conversations with many of them confirms that they benefited from the "heightened interests" Drott described.

Like most musicians, those at the centre of the growing tango community benefited from the availability of governmental funds in multiple ways. Grants and government programs were used to initiate projects, fund recordings (two of the last albums recorded by Gerardo Jerez LeCam were entirely funded by government grants), defray travel expenses or even assist artists with their daily living expenses. The situation was far from perfect but it allowed the materialization of numerous ventures that one was hard pressed to imagine them taking shape in France today, let alone the Argentine context in the 1980s. One of these ventures was a multidisciplinary, nine-month-long project organized by the director of a cultural centre in the city of Le Mans during the late 1990s.[28] The idea, Osvaldo Calo told me, was to get people with employment or social integration issues involved in an artistic project. "A creative undertaking that could help them build confidence and

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[27] Lang's expansion of what was understood by culture from the government's perspective drew numerous critiques. Intellectuals like Alain Finkielkraut argued that extending the definition diluted everything in a sort of "cultural broth" (Finkielkraut 1987).

[28] According to Osvaldo, the cultural centre was located in the middle of a "difficult" neighbourhood. It had been built there in order to make cultural activities available to those who usually don't have access to them (Calo, interview with the author, April 22, 2011). (El centro cultural estaba en medio de un barrio difícil. Lo habían construido ahí para llevar la cultura a la gente que usualmente no tiene acceso a ella).

see things from a different perspective" (Calo, interview with the author, April 22, 2011).[29] Tomas worked in association with a choreographer, and for eight months, those involved took writing workshops, acting and songwriting classes, and singing lessons. The whole project culminated with nine performances accompanied by *L' Orchestre Regional de Basse-Normandie*. "It was a beautiful project, a marvelous experience for those involved," sentenced Osvaldo (Calo, interview with the author, April 22, 2011).[30]

The objectives of the Le Mans project are a clear reflection of the ideals that informed the way many French citizens perceived culture and its role in society in the aftermath of the revolts of May 1968. The same ideal kindled the interest some locals developed for the music coming from the Argentine community of expatriates, as noted above. From a musical perspective, the work Gubitsch did in Le Mans presents us with a facet of the artist that shares little relation with his tango-related explorations. At the same time, the possibility of participating in ventures of this kind allowed musicians to expand their professional horizons and remain actively involved in the music scene while making money.

Currently, the most significant form of governmental support is associated with the figure of the *intermittent du spectacle*. In France, the label *intermittent du spectacle* is applied to artists or technicians that, due to the nature of the milieu, work alternating periods of employment and unemployment, hence the term *intermittent* (intermittent). The condition of intermittent is granted to any artist working 507 hours (approximately three months of employment working eight hours a day) in a 319-day period. The artists will then receive work compensation for a period of eight months. The requirement of 507 hours seems easy to meet; with three four hour-long shows a week, a musician will be considered an intermittent. There is, however, a catch. Only engagements where the artist is paid according to the French music union pay-scheme are considered. Given the reduced number of gigs that meet this criterion, achieving the condition of intermittent is not easy. At the same time, for those who get it and are able to maintain it, the intermittent status is extremely beneficial.

[29] "Se trato de agarrar gente desocupada con problemas de integración social e involucrarlos en un proyecto artístico, creativo, que al mismo tiempo les otra perspectiva, los ayude a tomar confianza, etc."
[30] "Un muy lindo proyecto que para la gente que lo hizo fue genial."

Institutions, tango programs, and pedagogy

In Chapter 2 I argued that from a musical perspective it is not practical to approach the last three decades of tango activity in Paris as a continuance of the genre's previous history in the French capital. Marked differences in the overall approach to tango and its tradition prevent us from thinking about direct linkages. This, however, does not mean that the genre's local history had no impact on the Argentine tango musicians that began arriving in Paris in the 1970s and beyond. By the early 1980s, when the offshoots of *Tiempo Argentino* and other groups like Juan Carlos Caceres' *Gotan* began to play around Paris, tango no longer held the popular status it enjoyed in previous decades. The role the genre had played in cultural life of the city, however, was not forgotten. After all, as Alfonso Pacin noted, tango was "something they [Parisians] consider theirs" (Pacin, interview with the author, January 18, 2011).[31] The perception held by many within France's cultural organizations of tango as part of Paris' cultural heritage played a role in many of the conversations leading to the creation of tango related projects in educational and cultural institutions.

There exists a close organological relationship between the accordion, the single most important instrument when dealing with French popular music traditions, and the bandoneon. Due to the connection that exists between both "squeeze boxes," bandoneon players have been called to contribute in a number of projects the French government has set in place to study the development of the accordion and its repertoire in French popular music. When Mosalini arrived in Paris, "the accordion was taught in conservatories but no title was provided; the graduates and teachers had no title. The accordion was not recognized as the other instruments…the accordion was a minor instrument" (Mosalini, conversation with the author, April 19, 2011).[32] After the publication of *Don Bandoneón*, his first solo bandoneon record, Mosalini was called to join a group of accordionists convened by the government to revert the situation.

> …the album [*Don Bandoneon*] brought a bandoneonistic discourse never heard of here—here they did not know [Pedro] Laurenz, [Leopoldo] Federico, [Aníbal] Troilo. I was the carrier, if you want, of an instrumental technique that was unknown here. That is why I was immediately summoned to serve on the committee that was to design the certificate of aptitude for teaching accordion

[31] "El tango es una música que les pertenece…"
[32] "El acordeón se enseñaba en los conservatorios pero no se proveía titulo; los egresados y profesores no tenían titulo. El acordeón no era reconocido como los otros instrumentos…el acordeón era un instrumento menor."

> and bandoneon…When Mitterrand assumes the presidency, with his new cultural proposal, he says "enough, the accordion is representative of our popular culture but, at the same time, part of the contemporary and baroque traditions!" It was not just playing cute waltzes! The accordionists involved asked about the bandoneon as it was part of the family! Then, they called me. I joined a commission created with the intention of developing an educational program to prepare future candidates for the certificate of competence.[33] (Mosalini, conversation with the author, April 19, 2011)[34]

It is as a consequence of the work of that commission that Mosalini was asked by local composer and pedagogue Bernard Cavanna to design and set into motion a bandoneon program at the Le Conservatoire de la Ville de Gennevilliers. The program was one of the first bandoneon programs ever to be established at an educational institution. Soon after its establishment, Mosalini called his colleague Cesar Strocio, bandoneon player with the Juan Cedrón quartet, to join him at the conservatory. "Today there are a significant number of professionals who were born/formed there. They are the result of the educational program that we put together with Cesar Stroscio! Students from Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway..." (Mosalini, conversation with the author, April 19, 2011.)[35]

More recently, Paris' *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Dance*, one of France's most reputable music institutions, called Gustavo Beytelmann to organize and conduct a tango orchestra where accordions replaced the traditional bandoneons. According to Beytelmann "it was the first time that such a prestigious institution as the top national conservatory devoted one week to one genre like tango. At the institutional level, that had not happened…" (Beytelmann, conversation with the author, February 2, 2011).[36]

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[33] The CAP or *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (Certificate of Professional Aptitude) is a French high school diploma and vocational education. It gives and individual the qualification of worker or qualified employee in a particular occupation .
[34] "En el ámbito de los músicos locales particularmente ese disco aparece como un discurso bandoneonistico inédito. Acá no conocían a Laurenz, Federico, Troilo. Yo fui portador, si queres, de una técnica instrumental que era desconocida acá. Es por ello que inmediatamente me convocan para formar parte de la comisión que iba a diseñar el certificado de aptitud para la enseñanza del acordeón y el bandoneon…Cuando sube Miterand, con una nueva propuesta cultural, se dice basta… el acordeón es un instrumento representativo de la cultura popular y al, mismo tiempo, contemporánea, barroca! No era solamente el valsecito! Los acordeonistas involucrados preguntaron por el bandoneon ya que forma parte de la familia! Ahí me llaman a mi. Integro esa comisión con el objetivo de desarrollar un programa pedagógico que sirva para preparar a los futuros candidatos para el certificado de aptitud."
[35] "Hoy en día hay una cantidad importante de profesionales que nacieron, que se formaron allí. Son el resultado del programa pedagógico que armamos con Cesar Stroscio! Alumnos de Alemania, Suecia, Finlandia, Noruega…"
[36] "…era la primera vez que una institución tan prestigiosa como el conservatoria nacional superior le dedica una semana a un genero como el tango! A nivel institucional eso no había sucedido."

Another point that needs to be considered is the increasingly important role played by the breaching of geographical distances that has resulted from the latest advancements in technology and travel infrastructure. The increasing affordability and speed of travel within Western European countries has allowed tango artists to develop an incredibly fluid web of interactions across the region. This shortening of distances has significantly increased their level of participation by granting the performers and composers the possibility of initiating and maintaining projects outside the limits of the cities where they reside. It has also allowed musicians to avoid the prohibitive costs of living in major urban centres without losing the "presence" necessary to be considered an active member of the scene. Most of the musicians I interviewed during my fieldwork do not live in Paris. The ease with which these artists can communicate between each other and the equally speedy way in which they can finalize travel arrangements within most Western European cities allows them to set up rehearsals, classes or concert in a matter of hours. As expected, technology plays a central role in this equation, especially smart phones. A comment bandoneon player Victor Hugo Villena recently posted in his Facebook profile sums up the situation very clearly: "today, breakfast in France [Nantes], I teach in Holland at noon, and then spend the night in Portugal, where I play tomorrow" (posted on February 20th 2014).

Conclusion

As shown in the last two chapters, any attempt to understand what led to the most recent period of tango activity in Paris needs to look beyond the sole presence of an increasing community of nostalgic Argentines and address an intricate web of historical, economic, and sociopolitical issues. While the earlier local history of the genre was not particularly relevant for this new generation of tango musicians from a musical perspective, the longstanding relationship French people in general, but especially Parisians, had developed with tango contributed in various ways to the emergence and development of the current scene. The genre's deep-seated roots in France granted newcoming tango musicians a level of interest French audiences would have doubtfully shown for expressions totally foreign to them. In addition, due a change in cultural policy and a concomitant government push for the revalorization of the accordion as an instrument representative of various facets of French culture (not just *mussette*), a number of possibilities opened for bandoneon players and tango composers in French cultural institution and programs.

More recent historical events also contributed greatly to the situation of those Argentines that immigrated to France in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The enhanced sense of collective responsibility and sociopolitical participation that lingered in the aftermath of the May '68 movement resulted in an atmosphere of sympathy for Latin Americans suffering political persecution. The situation materialized into a general predisposition to engage with the community and their cultural expressions. Equally important was the political weight the communist party carried in local politics at the time. Political figures in many communes around Paris were particularly sensitive to the situation of those involved in political struggles such as the ones taking place across South America in the aftermath of the Cuban revolution. Help for political exiles materialized in the form of legal aid, social assistance, work placement, etc. While not having a direct effect on their music per se, the situation certainly eased what was certainly a difficult situation and perhaps by simply doing so, in some way or form, helped the artists in their creative processes.

Other aspect to consider is France's cultural infrastructure and the financial assistance artists received through the numerous programs the French governments has instituted in the last decades. While financial support from and accessibility to performance venues has decreased considerably in the last decades, institutions at various levels of government are still involved in most of the artistic projects of these artists.

In the following chapters the focus of the discussion turns to the music. The analytical section of this dissertation (Chapters 5 and 6) is preceded by a review of what a number of Parisian music critics and commentators had to say about the novel expressions coming from the Argentine community in the early 1980s (Chapter 4). The words of these authors shed some light on the expectations that existed around tango at the time. In addition, they bring into the discussion an issue of considerable importance in the relationships musician and audiences have established with tango, that is tango's perception as a "popular" or "art" music genre.

Chapter 4

Finding your place: new sounds, new context… same tradition?

The various sounds that began to emerge from within Paris' growing community of Argentine expatriates during the late 1970s and early 1980s were well received by the local public. During my conversations with the musicians responsible for those sounds or some of those who attended their performances, I heard countless references to the interest and support displayed by audiences in Paris and other French cities. As noted in the previous chapter, the politically charged message of groups like *Tiempo Argentino* and, to a lesser extent, the Gubitsch/Calo duo played a considerable role in shaping the nature of the relationship the local public initially established with their work. The way in which events unfolded after the dissolution of *Tiempo Argentino*, however, shows that beyond the concern shown by some French listeners for the realities the musicians denounced through their work, interest for these artistic projects rested ultimately on the music. In their own ways, all the members of the two main groups that emerged from the dissolute *Tiempo Argentino* (i.e., the Gubitsch/Calo duo, and the BCM trio)[1] continued working with segments of the community of Argentine expats in order to increase international pressure against the Argentine Military Junta and help recently arrived exiles. These political concerns and communal work, however, were not made part of the music with the fervor displayed in *Tiempo Argentino*. From the perspective of the ensemble, there was a clear shift in focus towards purely musical concerns. As noted before, internal discrepancies about the place allotted to politics in *Tiempo Argentino* exacerbated existing artistic differences that ended by bringing the ensemble to its final dissolution.

The political scenario was rapidly changing in Argentina. In April 1982, the Military Junta, led at the time by the dipsomaniac Lieutenant General Leopoldo Galtieri, launched an ill-conceived military campaign with the intention to regain control of the *Islas Malvinas* (Falkland Islands).[2] The

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[1] After the dissolution of Tiempo Argentino, guitarist Tomas Gubitsch joined forces with Osvaldo Calo and formed the Gubitsch/Calo duo. The group later expanded to a trio with the addition of Parisian double-bass player Jean-Paul Celea; the other ensemble was the trio that Gustavo Beytelmann and Juan Jose Mosalini formed with local jazz double-bass player, Patrice Caratini.

[2] *Las Islas Malvinas* (Falkland Islands) are an archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean ruled by the United Kingdom since 1833 and subject to a long-standing Argentine territorial claim. Galtieri and most of his cabinet did not expect that the UK would respond militarily. Overpowered, poorly equipped, and badly trained, the Argentine army acknowledged its

belligerent move was nothing but a desperate attempt to mobilize nationalist fervors in order to regain some of the Junta's plummeting popular support and credibility. The campaign was a disaster and the Junta was forced to call for democratic elections. In October 1983 Argentines returned to the polls and elected Raul Alfonsín as the country's 46th president. The reality of the country did not change overnight; the transition to democracy was an arduous process resisted by many local and foreign interests that had been favoured by the military. After the elections, however, numerous exiles considered that the conditions were finally in place for a safe return to their homeland. Things also changed for those who chose to remain abroad. The disappeared (around 30,000 according to the commission Alfonsín created to investigate the fate of the victims of forced disappearances),[3] the tortures, the persecution, and overall feeling of constant fear had left an indelible mark, but the country's gradual political transition towards the reinstatement of a democratic system offered exiles, especially artists, the possibility to rethink the nature of their relationship with their country and its traditions.

The interest French audiences developed for ensembles like *Tiempo Argentino*, the Gubitsch/Calo duo, the BCM trio or most of the other tango-influenced projects that would continue to emerge throughout the following decades is certainly not surprising. These groups were tightly rehearsed ensembles composed of superb instrumentalists that offered listeners a musical experience that was, in many respects, unique. Although these groups shared many of the conceptual principles characteristic of the fusion movement so popular at the time, the music genres that shaped the core of their sound and the original ways in which these traditions were treated, made them quite distinct, particularly to European listeners unacquainted with the sonic entanglements artists in Argentina were creating using local folklore, tango, jazz, and contemporary western concert music.[4]

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defeat after British forces retook the islands' capital on June 14th 1982. Around 649 Argentine soldiers and 255 British combatants lost their lives during the conflict.

[3] The commission was presided by the Argentine writer Ernesto Sábato and presented its final findings in a report titled *Nunca Más* (Never Again). An English version of the commission's full report has been made available online—http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/index2.htm.

[4] In an article published in the Argentine newspaper *El Clarín* in October 7th 1987, Jorge Göttling informed his readers that the trio formed by Gustavo Beytelmann, Juan José Mosalini, and Patrice Caratin was considered by the French press to be "the greatest exponent of avant-garde tango even know in France." The author noted that some French commentators had gone as far as to suggest that the ensemble managed to take listeners to a dimension of porteño music up until then unknown in Paris. Readers, however, were advised to take these impressions with more than one grain of salt. While acknowledging the uniqueness of the trio's sound, Göttling considered that such perceptions were probably an exaggeration resulting in part, from the fact that local critics where not up to speed with Buenos Aires' roster of tango musicians and ensembles (Göttling 1987 — Son considerados como el mayor exponente del tango de

I found further confirmation of the appreciation French audiences showed for these artists and their work in the words of the various music critics, columnists, and commentators who shared their impressions in local magazines and journals at the time. All the authors responsible for the articles read had favorable things to say about the artists and their music. In the two earliest reviews I found, dating from January and May of 1978, the group *Tiempo Argentino* was commended for its "maturity" (*Le Monde*, May 26, 1978)[5] and the "rare disciplined rigour " achieved (*Le Matin*, January 14, 1978).[6] In another article, published in the February 1982 edition of the magazine *Sansfrontière*, Eduardo Olivares praised the individual talent that existed within the ensemble. The author lamented the short existence of the group but showed himself enthusiastic about the auspicious future of the musicians involved (*Sans Frontière*, February 19, 1982).

Accolades continued to be common among the editorials that in subsequent years followed the work of groups like the Gubitsch/Calo or the BCM trio. Articles published throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s demonstrate a genuine interest for the original sounds these musicians were creating though their explorations of various Argentine music traditions, especially tango. At the same time, the novelty applauded by the press presented critics and commentators with a challenge when it came time to categorize the music according to the labels their readership seemed to expect. The articles show authors struggling to reconcile what they heard with the expectations that at the time existed around Argentine expressions, especially tango. Their articles suggest that the musical explorations of groups like the Gubitsch/Calo duo and the BCM trio came to defy their own ideas about tango and the perceptions they considered their readers had when it came to the Argentine genre.

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vanguardia que se haya conocido en Francia—lo cual no es poco si se hace revista a recientes embajadas—y algunos de sus exegetas dicen que logran Instalar a los espectadores en una dimensión hasta ahora des conocida en Paris de la música porteña. Probablemente se trate de exageraciones, teniendo en cuenta que esos críticos no conocen nuestra planilla de músicos y conjuntos tangueros, pero no es menos cierto que, efectiva mente, el trío posee calidad individual y también ese canyengue necesario, mas allá del repertorio que se ejecute)

[5] "Il y a, dans ce jeune groupe, une maturité, une sorte de calme et une rigueur rares."

[6] "Une synthèse réussie entre le tango, la musique contemporaine et le jazz moderne…"

Challenging expectations

Critical responses to Tiempo Argentino and its offshoots

Claude Fleouter described *Tiempo Argentino* as a group that "reinvented tango" and expanded the genre's sonic universe (*Le Monde*, May 26, 1978).[7] A few months prior to the publication of Fleouter's piece, *Le Matin*, printed an article by Guy Schwartz titled "*Tiempo Argentino: Le tango n'est plus ce qu'il était*" (the phrase *le tango n'est plus ce qu'il était* can be translated as tango is no longer what it was or tango is no longer what it used to be) (*Le Matin*, January 14, 1978). Nowhere in the article does the author elaborate on the details leading to the statement opening his piece. While it would have been interesting to read Schwartz's own explanation, it does not seem necessary to get into the nuances of *Tiempo Argentino*'s music or speculate about the sounds Parisians would have associated with older tango expressions back in the 1980s in order to imagine what he intended by the phrase *le tango n'est plus ce qu'il était*. His readership would have been able to form a good idea of the suggested differences upon reading the author's account of the musicians' eclectic backgrounds, the electrified instrumentation of the ensemble or the list of traditions he considered informed the "successful music synthesis" produced by the group (i.e., tango, contemporary music, and modern jazz).

Not surprisingly, Schwartz was not the only commentator who addressed this aesthetic contrast. Daniel Cresson also brought it to the fore in his own review of *Tiempo Argentino*'s work. Cresson, however, was considerably more blunt than his colleague. "Brusquely, the French discovered that tango has changed since Carlos Gardel" we read in his article (*Le Monde de la Musique*, February 31, 1981).[8] The comment was evidently hyperbolic in nature. Like many other Argentine figures of tango's golden era, Gardel enjoyed remarkable popularity in France. After his first appearances in the French capital and Cannes back in October 1928, Gardel continued to visit his country of birth regularly, leaving a long-lasting impression on the local public.[9] In the words of Patrice Caratini, the bassist of the BCM trio, "when Piazzolla began to be known in France, around

[7] "Tiempo Argentino réinvente le tango, lui apporte de nouveaux instruments — ou en reprend d'autres utilises autrefois, comme la flute — élargit l'univers sonore, l'engouffre dans de nouveaux chemins…"
[8] "Brusquement, les Français découvrent que le tango a bien changé depuis Carlos Gardel."
[9] According to tango historian José Gobello, these events that gave initial momentum to his skyrocketing international career (Gobello 2008).

1956/58, you could already breathe the tango brought by Gardel" (La Nación, October 11, 1986).[10] One cannot overlook the role Gardel played in the popularization of tango in France, but much had taken place between the early death of the legendary Franco-Argentine[11] singer in 1935 and the jazz-infused textures of *Tiempo Argentino*. Considering tango's history in France, it seems unlikely that the velvety voice of the iconic baritone would have been the first sound Parisians would have associated with tango. Even less so if we take into consideration that various renowned French artists having no direct ties with the French tango scene had incorporated the Argentine genre into their repertoires: Fernandel, Jacques Brel, Alibert, and Léo Ferré were among the numerous French stars that delved into tango. Some, like Fernandel, approached it humorously. Others exploited the nostalgia and drama commonly associated with the genre, as did Brel in his "*Le Tango Funèbre*" (Funeral tango). In other cases, tango was just part of the song's story and the music, often packed with clichés, was used as a sort of sonic contextualization. The relationships these non-tango artists established with the genre highlights the extent to which aspects of the Argentine tradition (primarily those tied to its vocal and dance expressions) had been made part of local culture.

Cresson's reference to Gardel was still significant. Beyond the various paths tango followed in France, local ideas around the genre were by and large much closer to the aesthetic models that one could associate with Gardel than those explored by the members of *Tiempo Argentino*. This becomes very clear when reviewing the various artists—predominantly singers—that filled the bill of the French television show *La Chance aux Chansons*. Beyond the expected idiosyncrasies of each artist, there is a sense of a shared sensibility among the performances, an approach to the interpretation of tango where the influence of local traditions (such as bal-musette and the nouvelle chanson) can be easily heard. Nardo Zalko described the 'Frenchified tango' of Mario Melfi's orchestra as "less vigorous than the Argentinean, more romantic" (Zalko 2001, 155).[12] His depiction could also be used to refer to interpretations displayed in *La Chance aux Chansons*. Even while uniquely French, these performances have roots in the style epitomized by Carlos Gardel.

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[10] "Cuando Piazzolla se dio a conocer en Francia en el 56/58, ya se respiraba mucho el tango que había propagado Gardel."

[11] Although some still like to believe that Carlos Gardel was born in Uruguay or Argentina, it has been proven that the iconic singer often referred to as *Carlitos* (diminutive of Carlos), *El Zorzal Criollo* (The Creole Song Thrush), The King of Tango, *El Mago* (The Magician), *El Morocho del Abasto* (The Black-haired from Abasto) or *El Mudo* (The Mute), was once Carlos Romuald Gardes and was born to a French unmarried laundress named Bertha Gardes in Toulouse, France, on December 11th 1890.

[12] "…menos vigoroso que el argentino, mas romántico…"

More relevant than Cresson's mention of the Argentine icon is perhaps his use of the adverb brusquely. The term points to an abrupt or offhand change, one that is likely to surprise or shake the audience in some way. As presented, the situation underscores the absence of a transitional stage between two chronologically and aesthetically distant periods of tango activity, a phase that would have conceivably 'prepared' Cresson's readership for what began to take place in the late 1970s. The comment reinforces the perception that there was a considerable gap between the older approaches Cresson grouped under the figure of Carlos Gardel and the expressions that began to take shape in the late 1970s. As pointed out in chapter two, it is this gap that gets in the way of imagining possible stylistic lineages or historical continuities between what began to take place around the time of *Tiempo Argentino* and previous periods of tango activity in France. The absence of such a transitional period can also help us to understand some of the challenges local audiences faced when such ideas about tango were offered as points of reference when dealing with the music of *Tiempo Argentino*, or any of the other ensembles that in subsequent years explored new conceptualizations of tango.

Tiempo Argentino was not the only group challenging local perceptions of tango. According to the comments that appeared in the local press, the work of the two main ensembles resulting from its dissolution, the Gubitsch/Calo duo and the BCM trio, continued to do so. This is initially evidenced by the title of the piece by Eduardo Olivares, "*Les libres parcours du tango*" (the free paths of tango) (*Sans Frontière*, February 19, 1982). Although the article opens with a quick overview of the music of *Tiempo Argentino* and singer Juan Cedrón, its main focus is on the duo of Tomas Gubitsch and Osvaldo Calo. Like Schwartz, Olivares considered that, in general, these new expressions proved that tango was no longer what it used to be: there was a new sense of liberty that granted the genre new uncharted paths, a positive development. Although liberty is considered in the western context as a *condicio sine qua non* of a musician's creative process, if used in excess, it can result in challenges to the status quo. According to Olivares, Gubitsch and Calo crossed that invisible line regarding tango. After praising the free spirited transgressions of the artists, Olivares wonders if the music of the *très beau* (beautiful/very fine) Gubitsch/Calo ensemble should be labeled tango at all. The rationale behind his answer resonates with the ideas expressed by Schwartz and Cresson in their reviews of *Tiempo Argentino*. "Definitely not if we listen to it against what we know about tango so far" was Olivares conclusion (idem.).[13] Interestingly, after placing the music of the duo outside the

[13] "Du tango? Certes non si l'on entend par là ce que nous connaissons jusqu'à présent." Olivares does not detail the elements that defined the knowledge about tango he believed widespread amongst his readership. (Although such specific information does not seem necessary to imagine the sort of conflicts listeners at the time would have found

realm of what he considered as tango, Olivares proceeded to stress the same relationship he previously questioned by circuitously referencing something Argentine writer Julio Cortázar had shared with him in a previous conversation. Cortázar, a declared lover of jazz, considered that traditional tango could not "fly very high" due to the simplicity of a music structure that did not allow musicians much license for improvisation and freedom (idem.). (There are multiple issues with Cortázar's assertion but it is Olivares' point that concerns us here.) "Tango?" asked the author in reference to the music of Gubitsch and Calo. Certainly not if judged against what the author understood as tango. At the same time, Olivares hears in the music of the duo a challenge to Cortázar's view. If I read Olivares correctly, the challenge to Cortázar's view can be equated with a tango where changes in the music structure have allowed musicians to overcome previous limitations. By article's end one is not quite sure where exactly Olivares would position the work of the duo in relation to tango. What is clear, however, is that sounds like those produced by Gubitsch, Calo, and other recent members of the Argentine community were forcing many in the French capital to review their ideas around tango.

Should tango act as a point of initial reference at all when dealing with the music of Tomas and Osvaldo? In the case of *Tiempo Argentino*, placing tango as a sort of contextualizing point of departure seemed obvious: *Tango Rojo* was the actual title of the album; one of the members of the group (Juan José Mosalini) was a leading figure in the Argentine tango scene, and he played the bandoneon (the instrument inherently tied to the tango tradition); tango was also referenced as one of the ensemble's points of departure in the text Julio Cortázar contributed for the jacket of the album; finally, although not in its most traditional form, tango could also be heard in the music of the group. When dealing with the duo formed by Tomas and Osvaldo, however, ties to tango were not as strong. The young duo did not present itself as a tango ensemble. The term tango did appear on the album but only as the title of one of the movements of the *Suite de los Puertos* (Ports' Suite; listen to track 34 on the CD); other music terms, carrying weightier and longer histories than tango were used in the titles of the compositions comprising the album (i.e., milonga, fugue, suite) and none was singled out as a point of musical reference. More important, ties to traditional expressions of the genre were not that evident in the music, even in the movement entitled tango. This is certainly not surprising since the young artists did not consider the duo a modern tango ensemble: in

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between the music of the duo and commonly held ideas about tango.) The author was not explicit in this point but the tone of his comments suggests that he considered that general ideas about tango remained associated to old local expressions, sounds and images that one could imagine linked to the local singers of the 1960s.

1982, the genre was not a tradition that Tomas or Osvaldo considered part of their musical palettes; nor was it one the young musicians had engaged with at a professional level. The situation would change considerably in the following years as tango began to take an increasingly important place in the artistic and personal lives of these musicians. At this point, however, their relationship with the genre was, at best, a distant one. How could it have been otherwise? Tomas and Osvaldo had taken their first professional steps into the realm of tango only a few years before the formation of the duo and in ensembles where tango did not carry much weight in the overall musical mix. Back in Buenos Aires, Tomas Gubitsch had played in Rodolfo Mederos' *Generación Cero* and then, once in Paris, he joined Osvaldo in Piazzolla's short-lived second electronic octet. In *Generación Cero*, Mederos tried to balance jazz, rock and the music of Buenos Aires, something that Piazzolla had already tried with his first electronic octet in 1975. Throughout the so-called "electronic period," Piazzolla drifted aimlessly between jazz, rock, and tango in an attempt to, as Diego Fischerman and Abel Gilbert put it, internationalize his sound (Fischerman and Gilbert 2009). The results, as the various recordings produced at the time attest, were not particularly memorable. Piazzolla himself considered the experience a "*paso en falso*" (misstep),[14] and after the shortened tour of the second octet, he returned to the acoustic textures that had made such an impression on young musicians like Gubitsch and Calo. The influence of the bandoneon player's conceptualizations can be clearly heard in the music of the duo, but connections to more traditional expressions of tango can only be inferred from the musicians' use of some techniques characteristic of traditional expressions of the genre (e.g., melodic articulation, *bordoneos* or *arrastres*).[15] Facts as their suggested relationship with tango, their short association with Piazzolla, Gubitsch's participation in *Tiempo Argentino*, and, of course, their nationality seemed to suggest association as much as any traces of tango one could hear in the actual music.

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[14] Piazzolla used the term misstep (paso en falso) in specific reference to the second electronic octet. At the same time, the composer was well aware of the general discontent that existed with the whole of his "electronic" output. After a series of critiques he received in France, Piazzolla recognized that they [the critics] were right. I'm Piazzolla, he told Natalio Gorin, my music deals with tango. "What do I have to do with the Jazz/Rock fusion?" (Yo soy Piazzolla, mi música tiene que ver con el tango. ¿Que tengo que ver yo con la fusión jazz rock? (Gorin 2003).

[15] In his book *El Violin en el Tango* (The Violin in Tango), Ramiro Gallo defines the *arrastre* (drag) as "[t]he most important rhythmic ornamentation…it is an anticipation of the real note and is used indifferently in the rhythmic-harmonic base or in the rhythmic melody. It emphasizes articulated beginnings or arrivals as accented sounds in a discourse, almost always with short articulation" (Gallo 2011, 103). The word *bordoneo* derives from the term *bordona*, meaning any of the three lowest strings of the guitar. Taken from Argentine folklore, the *bordoneo* is a form of accompaniment structured around various embellishments of the rhythmic pattern of the slow *milonga* (dotted quarter-eighth tied to quarter-quarter).

François Collet brought the relevance of the artists' nationality to the fore in his piece for the March 1981 edition of *Guitare Magazine*. In the review of the duo, Collet described tango as omnipresent in the rhythmic backbone that sustained the ensemble. Like his colleagues, however, Collet was very cautious when dealing with specifics. Although ubiquitous, he wrote, tango is not present in its traditional scheme, "but in its [the ensemble's] profound pulsation articulated by this permanent and carnal reference to national sources" (*Guitare Magazine*, March, 1981).[16] As in Olivares' case, it is not clear where exactly Collet heard the influence of tango in a music that later in the same article he labeled as "unclassifiable but mostly free" (*Guitare Magazine*, March, 1981),[17] but his words ultimately make sense. The music has a unique drive shaped by a strong pulsation that, at moments, one can hear hints of the influence of a number of Argentine music traditions, especially tango. It is very clear, however, that there were numerous degrees of separation mediating the influence, most clearly the figure of Astor Piazzolla. In the context of the knowledge base of Collet's readership, however, the suggestion of a tango-like pulsation articulated by the recurrence of "carnal references" to unidentified national idioms does not say much about the music; the comment seems geared to simply underline a sense of difference. More specifically, it provides a sense of difference rooted in the perception of the music as the product of a foreign ethos.

The foreignness of the music is also underlined by Sergio Rosadas in his review of the duo's first album, *Resistiendo la Tormenta* (withstanding the storm). The author writes about a rich musical world crafted through the use of a language that, while original and modern, still maintains its cultural identity (*Jazz Hot*, September/October, 1982).[18] One is initially struck by the dichotomy Rosadas presents between originality and tradition. The not-uncommon emphasis on this polarity is indicative of the time and context in which the article was written. In fact, undertones of this assumed irreconcilability between tradition, especially "other's" tradition, and modernity can be detected—although to varying degrees in numerous of the articles I read. Like Collet, Rosadas fails to address any of the particularities he heard as markers of the unspecified cultural tradition; only a vague mention of the Argentine milonga is presented in a parenthetical example. The fact that within the Argentine music tradition, the term milonga has not one but multiple and somewhat

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[16] "L'écriture soignée de chacune des pièces dévoile une constante et délicate hésitation entre le modal et le tonal, sous-tendue par une ossature rythmique dans laquelle le tango est omniprésent, non dans son schéma traditionnel, mais bien dans sa pulsation profonde par cette référence permanente et charnelle aux sources nationales."
[17] "…inclassable but surtout libre."
[18] "[L]e duo, nous fait découvrir un monde musical très riche. Ainsi, tout en conservant leur identité culturelle…ils arrivent à créer un langage original and moderne…"

unrelated meanings further problematizes the use of the term (see footnote 18 in page 11). Rosadas limited his description to "*une forme musicale typique*" (a typical [Argentine] music form)(*Jazz Hot*, September/October, 1982). As with Collet, Rosadas' mention of the milonga and the ensemble's ability to maintain its cultural identity do not offer much from a musical perspective. Rather, the comment seems geared to corroborate an elusive sense of foreignness and authenticity, something that the author seems to think his readers would prefer over any description focused in the actual sounds of the group. It also allowed these authors to circumvent elegantly a more detailed examination of a music they could not easily define. While they praise the artistry of the musicians and their overall contributions, these experienced music commentators had problems dealing with these musics when set against the backdrop of what their expectations told them about Argentine traditions, especially tango.

Nowhere are these difficulties more clearly outlined than in the circuitous efforts commentators made to try to link the music of the Gubitsch/Calo with the traditional canon. As noted above, not once did Rosadas use the term tango in his article. The omission is particularly surprising since the music suggests that the duo's approach to the milonga, which Rosadas signaled as influential in their music, follows the way in which it had been historically treated within the realm of tango; the music of the duo shows no ties to the rural milonga that preceded tango. After avoiding any mention of tango, Rosadas takes an interesting turn at the very end of the article to unload the whole weight of the genre's history on the shoulders of the young artists. Rosadas does this by suggesting that the Gubitsch/Calo duo followed the steps of another Argentine duo that had recently performed in Paris' *Trottoirs de Buenos Aires*,[19] the influential piano and guitar ensemble formed by Horacio Salgán and Ubaldo de Lío. The musicians began to play together in 1957, soon after tango's golden era came to its close. Theirs was one of the few small ensembles that continued the tango tradition after the period of large big orchestras came to an end. The duo's approach to tango was fresh, full of contrasting textures and driven by the incredibe sophistication of the contrapuntal dynamic that existed between Salgán and De Lío (for an example of the music of the duo listen to track 35 on the CD). Salgán was an extraordinary pianist and also a prolific composer and an avid arranger; today he is considered a revolutionary figure like De Caro, Troilo or Piazzolla,

[19] Le *Trottoirs de Buenos Aires* was a Parisian "*Tangueria*," Paris' first according to some. It openend its doors in November 1981 with a concert by the famous *Sexteto Mayor*. The *Trottoirs de Buenos Aires* was located in the city's Les Halles district, in the first arrondissement—37 rue des Lombards. It owed its name to the sidewalks of Buenos Aires, and despite some fierce attempts to rescue it, the place finally disappeared in 1994.

an artist that opened new paths for the conceptualization and performance of tango. With this in mind, Rosadas' suggestion of a direct connection is inexplicable. Both ensembles were formed by Argentines and shared the same instrumentation. In addition, all artists involved were superb instrumentalists capable of presenting their novel music conceptualizations in the most refined of ways; but that is as far as any suggested linkages can go.

Vague references to national sources, unclear descriptions of the music traditions that were presented as musical influences, convoluted descriptions of the role played by improperly defined expressions of tango, and even more confusing depictions of suggested stylistic lineages underline a series of problems in these articles. As mentioned at the onset of this chapter, these issues were likely a consequence of the difficulties that music critics, reviewers, and commentators had in relating the sounds emerging from the Argentine community of expatriates to expectations formed by decades of exposure to Argentine traditions, especially tango. French musicologist and tango musician Mathieu Cepittelli suggested this when he noted that, "[f]or us, Westerners, evoking tango is not like evoking the *Tule* music of the *Wayapi* of Guyana or the polyphonic vocals of the Aka pygmies: we are familiar with it. It is considerably easy for us to form a mental representation…" (Cepitelli 2006).[20] For most French nationals, and westerners in general, tango is not an alien tradition. Numerous conversations I have had with people from different regions in France and other European cities have confirmed this. Even those who have never personally engaged with any of tango's expressions are still likely to have encountered references to them in films, TV commercials or magazine ads. By and large, urban European audiences are able to form what Cepitelli referred to as a "mental representation" of tango. These representations vary significantly, but in almost every instance, the person in question will be able to come up with a direct or indirect reference to the genre. It is worth remembering that, "some people in France still think that tango is theirs, not Argentinean" (Pacin, interview with the author January 18, 2011). Tango was certainly not an alien form to most French people, but, as indicated by the press reviews examined here, the images or sounds triggered by locals' past experiences with tango were not particularly helpful when it came to deal with the music of ensembles like *Tiempo Argentino* or the Gubitsch/Calo duo. The new sounds of these groups clashed with existing perceptions. At the same time, there was enough tango substance in the music to allow for this conflict. After all, in order for the content to subvert

[20] "Pour les occidentaux que nous sommes, évoquer le tango n'est pas comme évoquer la musique de tule de Wayapi de Guyane ou les polyphonies vocales des pygmees Aka : noues y sommes familiers. Il nous est assez aise de nous en figurer une représentation mentale…"

the expectations created by the labels employed for its description, sufficient correspondence between label and content has to be established by the listener (Samson 2014).

French critics and commentators seem to have had an easier time using tango as the prism through which to approach the music of the BCM trio, the other group created by ex-members of *Tiempo Argentino*.[21] In the reviews of the trio's music, ties to tango were suggested without the vacillations writers displayed in their reviews of *Tiempo Argentino* or the Gubitsch/Calo duo. This is not particularly surprising. First, the trio's first album was comprised entirely of reinterpretations of traditional tangos. In fact, the album was titled *La Bordona* after the famous tango composed by violinist Emilio Balcarce. Second, although the music shows the influence of multiple genres and compositional approaches (e.g., jazz, contemporary western concert music, atonalism), the sound of the trio was firmly anchored in the tango tradition. The unmistakable presence of the bandoneon in the hands of one of the most experienced tango players at the time certainly helped in this regard. It was ultimately the sum of the approaches of all instrumentalists involved, however, which firmly rooted the trio's sound in the tango tradition. Finally, even the images used in the album underscored the Argentine influence—the cover of the album shows the members of the trio seated around a round, marble-top table, the kind commonly seen in the cafes of Buenos Aires at the time, smoking, drinking, and playing a game of the most popular card game in Argentina, *truco*. In this context, references to tango were unavoidable. At the same time, however, this shared recognition of tango as the ensemble's strongest musical referent was often juxtaposed with comments that highlighted the reassuring originality of the trio's music. Authors often talked about the multiple musical directions pursued by the musicians and the idiosyncratic sense of freedom that characterized the treatment of the group's eclectic set of influences. Although the sound of the trio was perceived as distinctively original, its anchorage in the tango tradition was never doubted. The

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[21] The fact that Beytalmann and Mosalini played leading roles in both *Tiempo Argentino* and the BCM trio should not be equated with similarities in the aesthetic stances of the ensembles. As explained by Esteban Buch in his examination of Beytelmann's music, *Tiempo Argentino* was a "sextet of "tango moderno" close to the electronic groups of Piazzolla, inspired by the then novel crisscross between jazz and rock." In the BCM trio "the writing becomes much more complex, both at rhythmic level, in the harmonic language, and the contrapuntal weaving." If the overall texture of *Tiempo Argentino* was characterized by an "accompanied melody over a relatively simple rhythm section," in the trio, "what each instrument lost in autonomy was gained in complexity, thus contributing to an overall sound of great horizontal and vertical density" (Buch 2012, 166) […sexteto de "tango moderno" cercano a los grupos eléctricos de Piazzolla., inspirados por el cruce entonces novedoso entre jazz y rock] […la escriture se vuelve mucho mas compleja, tanto en el plano rítmico como en el lenguaje armónico y el entramado contrapuntisitico] Si la textura de Tiempo Argentino estaba caracterizada por [una melodía acompañada sobre una sección rítmica relativamente simple] en el trío, la parte de cada instrumento pierde en autonomía lo que gana en complejidad, contribuyendo así a un sonido global de gran densidad vertical y horizontal].

music of the BCM trio was not presented as standing in contrast to but growing from early expressions of tango.

Challenging a different set of expectations: responses in their homeland

Reactions to the music of the trio were not that different in tango's own homeland. The views displayed by the Argentine and Uruguayan press did not differ greatly from those of music critics and commentators across the Atlantic, at least not when it came to their evaluation of tango's place in the overall sound of the group. In the numerous articles that were published following a series of concerts the BCM trio performed in Buenos Aires and Montevideo throughout the months of October and November of 1986, writers on both sides of the River Plate meticulously underscore the group's strong ties with tango (listen to tracks 36 and 37 on the CD for recordings of two works the trio played during this tour). By and large, however, commentators in both South American capitals were considerably more thorough than their European counterparts in their assessments of the distance that existed between the trio's conceptualizations and traditional expressions of the genre. Some reviewers aimed to draw a clear line between the aesthetic of the group and previous forms. In their eyes, the trio was not a tango ensemble per se but a group where the genre acted as starting point or, as René Vargas Vera put it, a "suggestive idea" (*La Nación*, October 14, 1986). According to Uruguayan journalists Julio Novoa, the musicians presented "a stream of tango-jazz that can be classified simply as contemporary music" (*Mañana*, October 9, 1986).[22] Some voices were more categorical than Novoa's: "We are not dealing with a tango trio (even though tango's presence is very important)," warned the author behind an article that appeared in the October 3rd edition of the Uruguayan journal *El Diario*; the description chosen was "a trio of original music, without labels…" (*El Diario*, October 3, 1986).[23] In her piece for the Argentine daily *El Clarín*, Sibila Camps opted for a more ceremonial descriptor: "homogeneous chamber popular music with a *tanguero* taste and a scent of jazz" (*El Clarín*, October 26, 1986).[24]

Not all commentators heard the music of the trio as detached from the tango tradition as the above-mentioned reviews would suggest. For many authors, there was no conflict with the genre's

[22] "Los interpretes cultivan una línea del tango-jazz que puede clasificarse simplemente como música contemporánea."
[23] "No se trata de un trío "tango" (incluso a pesar de que la presencia del mismo es muy importante), sino de un trío de música original, sin etiquetas…"
[24] "Homogénea música popular de cámara con sabor tanguero y aroma de jazz."

established conventions. What the group offered was perceived as a "new conception of tango" (*Mundocolor*, September 29, 1986)[25] that did not deny or break with tradition but actually expanded it (*Jaque*, October 15, 1986).[26] In the words of Coriún Aharonian and José Wainer, the music was an "attempt to find a viable exit to tango's historic passageways" (*Brecha*, October 10, 1986).[27] While emphasizing a sense of continuity within the genre, none of these authors disregarded the nonconventional elements that shaped the sound of neither the trio nor the 'liberties' taken by its members in its conceptualization. There was, however, no fundamental contradiction. Where others saw rupture with tradition, they saw a harmonious succession between the 'original' product or tradition and the current offspring of tango's genesis (*El País*, October 8, 1986).[28]

When grouped together, these reviews suggest a complex variety of opinions regarding where exactly the BCM trio stood in relation to traditional tango. As Andres Castillo stated, it would be ultimately "sterile to discuss if their music is tango or not" (*La Hora*, October 13, 1986).[29] There are no measurable variables that could grant us a reliable answer from an empirical perspective. More important, however, is the question of what is to be gained by the exercise? "We make music, period, tagging it with a label can be simplistic and criminal" stated Gustavo Beytelmann (*La Hora*, October 1, 1986).[30] I don't disagree with Gustavo's statement; many times the often arbitrary use of labels carries no discernable musical significance and can interfere negatively with the listener's experience. At the same time, I consider that it is extremely beneficial to engage in a meticulous examination of why we hear the music of the trio, or that of any other artists working with increasingly malleable conceptions of tango, as tango (see chapter 4 and 5). Like any item used for the purposes of classification, the utility of labels depends on the context in which they are used and the intentions behind their application (see chapter 6).

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[25] "Yo diría que en estos aires de bandoneón, piano y contrabajo puede verse una concepción nueva del tango."
[26] "Compositivamente, tanto Mosalini como Beytelmann son la monolítica pertenencia del tango renovador que, paradójicamente, no rompe o niega la tradición sino que la continua y que la agrega."
[27] "…han intentado en la ultima década una salida posible al callejón histórico del tango."
[28] "La referencia al producto 'original' o tradicional, y los retornos actuales de la génesis tanguera se suceden armónicamente."
[29] "Seria estéril discutir si esto es tango o no."
[30] "Nosotros hacemos música a secas, ponerle un rotulo puede ser simplificador y criminal."

Tango and the 'cultured' vs. the 'popular' conflict

Based on the examination of some of the terms and categories that have been used in reference to the music of the BCM trio by commentators in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, this section addresses the question of what motivated these critics to question the "tango-ness" of the ensembles. The above-cited excerpts show that opinions varied significantly when it came to position the ensemble in relation to the canon of tango. Reactions, however, were not as disparate around what actual musical and aesthetic elements triggered these writers to address the question of "tango-ness." Despite certain differences, the majority of writers shared an underlying concern over the elaborated nature of the music. "Seduced by the wealth of the material's sound, the three musicians engaged in all musical directions, investigating all the timbral and rhythmic possibilities," summed up the author of an article published in the Uruguayan daily *La Hora*.[31] The description serves to underline the sense of complexity that most commentators heard in the music and perceived as reaching beyond the assumed limits of tango. This perception was also evident through the use of terms like "oneiric…esoteric…elegiac…and divagations" (*La Nación*, October 14, 1986) or the more common "music for musicians" (*La Hora*, October 13, 1986). By and large, however, writers did not label the music as exceedingly complex; the perceived intricacy was commonly implied via referencing the western European concert music tradition. "French trio of *chamber tango* will perform tomorrow" was the title of an article published in the Uruguayan journal *El Diario* (Italics are mine, *El Diario,* October 3, 1986).[32] The title did not say anything about the music per se, but the implications introduced by the combined reference to France and chamber music were charged with musical and aesthetic significance. The article closed with a suggestive sentence that read, "[o]thers have praised the exceptional nature of these three musicians, renovators of the ideas people had about traditional tango, infusing them with inspiration, musicality, and *a sense of* impressionism *characteristic of the* great works" (Italics are mine, Idem.).[33] Sibila Camps also referenced

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[31] "Seducidos por la riqueza del material sonoro, los tres músicos trabajaron en todas las direcciones musicales, investigando todas las posibilidades tímbricas y rítmicas."

[32] "Actuara trío francés de tango de cámara."

[33] "Otros han alabado lo excepcional de estos tres músicos, renovadores de la idea que la gente se hace sobre el tango tradicional, aportándole inspiración, musicalidad y un impresionismo propio de las grandes obras.
In the 1980's the musical reality of tango was not appreciated by a considerable portion of the population in Argentina and Uruguay, especially those in their twenties and thirties. By and large, tango was perceived as an anachronistic form associated with an older generation of reactionary men. Only the reduced number of people who actually followed the

the influence of the 'chamber music' aesthetic when referencing the "homogeneous chamber popular music" (*El Clarín*, October 26, 1986).[34] In another article titled *Admirable Trio Franco-Argentino* (Admirable Franco-Argentine Trio), Nelson Giguens wrote:

> Perfect and brilliant instrumentalists, endowed with the sharpest chamber sensibility in their creation of an authentic musical team, merging the popular with adequate contributions of the *cultured contemporary western sound*, bringing originality and definitive style, liking and making themselves liked, leaving visitors with the impression of optimal refinement in the realm of tango, and in a way that had never been possible to appreciate among us. (emphasis is mine; *El Día*, October 14, 1986)[35]

These quotes bring to the fore a general idea of what most commentators considered was the trio's main influence: Europe's concert music tradition. Numerous writers also mentioned jazz as a big influence, but the emphasis fell most heavily on what a writer under the *nom de plume* R.C. described as "the cultured" (*Alternativa*, October 9, 1986).[36]

From a musical perspective, any reference to Europe's concert music tradition, and especially chamber music are certainly not incorrect. Careful examination of the various traditions and musical dialogues that have influenced the conceptualizations of the BCM trio and some of the other tango ensembles that emerged in the last three decades in Paris is presented in chapter 6; here I offer a brief comment on the correctly underscored role played by some of Europe's concert music traditions at this time.

The definition of chamber music presented by Christina Bashford in her entry for the Grove Music Online[37] provides an appropriate framework for much of the repertoire that small tango ensembles have been playing since the era of the large *orquestas típicas* came to a close in the 1950s.

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small ensembles that kept the tango tradition alive at the time knew that there was another kind of tango. If we keep in mind the perceptions most people maintained with regards to tango, the music of the trio would have certainly, as the unknown author noted, showed that other paths were possible."

[34] "Homogénea música popular de cámara."

[35] "Perfecto y brillante instrumentistas, dotados de agudísimo sentido camartístico al construir un autentico equipo musical, aliando lo popular con adecuadas contribuciones de lo culto sonoro contemporáneo occidental, trayendo originalidad y estilo definitivo, gustando y haciendo gustar, dejando a los visitantes la impresión de un optimo refinamiento en la material tanguera como jamás había sido posible apreciar entre nosotros."

[36] Hacen "tango" pero fundamentalmente hacen música sin artificiales etiquetas, música original, donde cohabita lo popular con lo "culto."

[37] "In current usage the term 'chamber music' generally denotes music written for small instrumental ensemble, with one player to a part, and intended for performance either in private, in a domestic environment with or without listeners, or in public in a small concert hall before an audience of limited size" (Bashford).

Most of the key characteristics Bashford lists can be identified in the performances that small tango ensembles have been producing in the last decades. She writes:

> the term implies intimate, carefully constructed music, written and played for its own sake; and one of the most important elements in chamber music is the social and musical pleasure for musicians of playing together. (Bashford 2013)

While talking about his work with Tomas Gubitsch, Juanjo Mosalini described the group as a chamber ensemble. The term is not a common one in discussions about tango so I asked Juanjo if he could elaborate on the subject. He did, and as part of his response he offered a description where the social, one of Bashford's key elements, play a fundamental part.

> For me, the prototype is the string quartet... four guys who live together morning, noon, and night with the intention to get from a group, of which there are forty thousand examples, a unique sound defined by the sum of those four particular individuals. While I was saying that Tommy's [Tomas Gubistch] group would be the same if the bandoneon was played by me or someone else, no, it would not be the same as this specific group is the sum of five people; change one and the color changes. (Mosalini, interview with the author, February 2, 2011)[38]

Juanjo placed the emphasis on the distinct nature of the music resulting from the social and musical interaction of a reduced number of specific individuals working together towards a common goal. While nothing specific was said about the search for pleasure Bashford considered key in chamber music, the emotional gratification of those involved is an inherent part of Juanjo's understanding of the processes under discussion.

The emotional nuances of the musical dialogues that take place within the intimate world that chamber and tango musicians alike create for themselves when performing could not be possible if pleasure was not an intrinsic part of the process. Beyond the social considerations underlined by Bashford and Mosalini, there are musical ones. Since the mid to late eighteenth century, chamber music as a genre has become tightly associated with a repertoire of considerable intricacy: the sting quartets, quintets, and piano trios of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and their successors. With this weighty precedent in mind, many would feel reticent to stamp the music

[38] "Para mi el prototipo es el cuarteto de cuerdas… cuatro tipos que viven juntos mañana, tarde y noche con la intención de sacarle a una formación, de la cual hay cuarenta mil ejemplos, un sonido personal determinado por la suma de ellos cuatro. Si bien yo te decía que le grupo de Tommy seria el mismo si tocara yo u otro, no, no seria el mismo ya que ese grupo es la suma de cinco personas; cambias uno y el color cambia."

of a small tango ensemble with the 'chamber music' label. That, however, should not be the case; even if circumscribing the idea of chamber music to the works mentioned above, applying the label to the music making of small tango ensembles would still be pertinent. As it could be attested by anyone who has had the opportunity to hear, especially on stage, *El Sexteto Mayor* (listen to track 38 on the CD), *El Sexteto Tango*, *El trío Federico-Berlingieri-Cabarcos* (listen to track 39 on the CD), any of Astor Piazzolla's quintets, Reinaldo Nichele's ensemble (listen to track 40 on the CD) or Horacio Salgán's orchestra (to name just a few), the inherent intricacies of the music, the dramatic textural and mood changes characteristic of it, and the performative and communicative demands on the performers are similar to those common to the corpus of European concert music commonly grouped under the label of chamber music. The only substantial difference between these traditions is the length of the works performed—the length of tango arrangements varies but the large majority of them stay within the three- to six-minutes range. The difference, however, should not be equated with an equally substantial difference in the demands of the performance or its emotional charge. The words of the famous Uruguayan bass-baritone Erwin Schrott sum up the situation quite nicely. "In opera the tenor falls in love with the soprano. Then the baritone kills the tenor, and the soprano falls ill and dies. At the end the baritone is alone. This is exactly what happens in tango — but in one and a half minutes. The whole drama is played out in miniature with endless passion and intensity" (Schroot 2010). Using the term chamber music or alluding to Europe's concert music tradition in reference to certain tango expressions it is not inappropriate from a musical, social, or even aesthetic perspective.

None of the articles discussed above offered a clear description of the actual genre, style, or aesthetic approaches that apparently influenced the music of the BCM trio. Terms like 'chamber tango', 'chamber popular music' or general references to the 'great works' or the 'cultured' say little about the music per se. From a musical perspective, none of these terms offered readers much beyond an exceedingly generic aesthetic idea of what the music sounded like. The only clear message was that the music fell beyond what authors assumed, correctly or not, were the expectations their readers had about tango. The use of these labels with their implicit reference to a popular/cultured dichotomy, indicates that the goal was to tap into the non-musical implications associated with these western music forms, which educated urbanites have learned to link with the embodiment of artistic greatness, refinement, and good taste. In this way, the ensemble was conferred a respectability and refinement commonly associated with Europe's "cultured" musical traditions.

European "art" music and tango's inferiority complex

Europe's social, political, and cultural life played a fundamental role in the processes shaping the development of many aspects of Argentina as a nation. Many of the country's financial, legal, governmental, and cultural institutions were modelled after European ones, especially those in France and England. Customs from the old continent also contributed significantly to the fashioning of Argentinean lifestyles and cultural expressions, particularly in the cities where most of the thousands of European immigrants arriving to the country every year settled. It was in this increasingly heterogeneous context that tango began to take its initial shape. Throughout the processes leading to its progressive consolidation, tango incorporated many musical, aesthetic, and performance aspects associated with some of Europe's folk and concert music traditions. Elements of the high classical period and the early romantic era were particularly influential. Many of the highly skilled musicians that crossed the Atlantic, some self-taught, others packing years of education in Europe's renowned conservatories and orchestras, contributed significantly to the enrichment of the city's music life and played major roles in the development of many aspects of tango. Most of the neighborhood conservatories where the teenagers who would go on to revolutionize tango first studied were set in place by some of these newly arrived musicians and music pedagogues. From a tango-specific perspective, the European influence can be easily detected in tango's classic instrumentation (i.e., piano, strings, and bandoneon) and some of the performance practices used by its musicians: the harmonic language of tango in the golden era was fundamentally similar to that of the high classic period;[39] the design and treatment of tango melodies and melodic passages also evidence many aspects of the lyricism of European forms.[40] Tango composers and arrangers throughout the first half of the twentieth century found constant inspiration in the musical and aesthetic ideas of the high classical period and the romantic era.[41]

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[39] During a conversation I had with tango pianist and pedagogue Julian Peralta in Buenos Aires in December 2008, he shared with me part of an exchange he had previously had with Rodolfo Mederos. Mederos, considered by most as one of the most influential bandoneon players and pedagogues of the last decades, talked about the harmonic language and overall aesthetic of tango during the genre's golden era as the late arrival of of the classic/romantic period to the River Plate (Peralta, interview with the author, December 19, 2008).

[40] Carlos Gardel, tango's greatest icon, often talked about the influence the famous Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso, had on him. Gardel also had music tastes that extended beyond Argentine folklore and tango; unsurprisingly, the melody of one of the most famous tangos he compose with Uruguayan lyricist Alfredo Le Pera, *Por una cabeza*, is almost identical to a segment of Mozart's rondo in C major, K.373.

[41] In the eighth volume of the collection *Cuadernos de Lecturas Académicas*, a set of monographs published by *La Academia Nacional del Tango*, Mónica Maffía presents a meticulous analyst of Horacio Salgán's *A Fuego Lento*. Maffía addresses the

Beyond the sounds - after the status associated with Europe's concert music

Tango artists were interested not only in the sounds of Europe's concert music traditions, but were also drawn by the attitudes and the pomp that accompanied them. Many pictures taken in the late 1920s and early 1930s show leaders of famous orchestras standing in front of their respective ensembles with baton in hand, as a symphonic conductor would when about to give the ensemble the initial downbeat. Around the same time, orchestra leaders like Francisco Canaro, Roberto Firpo or Juan d'Arienzo began to adopt the same stance during live performances, conducting a well-rehearsed orchestra that could have performed with no glitches without the guidance that the individual at the podium was supposedly there to offer. Videographic documentation of performances by hundreds of professional tango orchestras proves that even the largest ones do not need a baton-waving conductor to take them through the textural complexities of a tango composition. In his discussion of the responsibilities of great jazz orchestra leaders like Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie, Christopher Small noted that "[t]eir authority, and the health of their bands, depended less on ways of playing imposed from without [the role of a conductor in the western concert music sense] than on their ability to coordinate the playing of the very diverse musicians in the band while leaving them space to function as creative individuals and to contribute ideas to the performance…" (Small 1998, 80). This may also refer to tango orchestras. While it is true that tango orchestras do not allow for the sort of individuality that most musicians find when playing in a jazz orchestra,[42] the conductor does not limit the role of a tango musician in a large ensemble. The role of each creative instrumentalist is to perfectly blend with the other section members and, ultimately, with the whole ensemble. A member of a symphonic orchestra would rightly argue that that is exactly what she does when playing in the orchestra's string or brass section.

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structural similarities that exist between Salgán's opening melody and the "circular structure" of Maurice Ravel's Bolero. Most important, however, is Maffía's examination of *A Fuego Lento*'s "starting point," Gioachino Rossini's The Barber of Seville. According to Salgán, the feeling of "something that evolves without interruption—and crescendo—had a great influence on me. It was finally that idea, suggested to me by text, not the music, of the aria "La Calumnia," which led me to this Tango. Possibly the most avant-garde of all my tangos" (Maffía 11).

This short historical review has focused on the role played by one of the many groups involved in the emergence and development of tango, European immigrants. I have not taken into consideration the contributions made by numerous other social groups (i.e., Afro-Argentines, *Criollos*, non-European immigrants, etc).

[42] Although soloistic passages or fully improvised solos were not uncommon in tango orchestras throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the role and approach to the idea of improvisation were fundamentally different than in the context of a jazz ensemble.

In a tango orchestra, however, sections are considerably smaller, usually between four and five members; each performer is hence more exposed. In addition, the importance of tango is its unique approach to articulation and its distinctly rhythmical nature further complicates sound blending within each section. More significant, however, is the distinctive way in which time and tempo are generally approached in tango. The elasticity with which a tango orchestra glides over an always-changing-but-never unclear sense of pulse demands a unique sense of communication within the ensemble. A well-rehearsed tango orchestra acts as any self-regulating "closed cardiovascular system" where the rate of the breathing determines the pulse of the heart and vice versa;[43] no external input is necessary. Since there was no apparent musical reason for a leader of a tango ensemble to assume the role of a symphony conductor, the main objective can arguably be to profit from the air of professionalism and respectability commonly associated with the same role in a symphonic or operatic context.

Rather than examining these attitudes by looking at the idiosyncratic personalities of some tango artists, I focus on the widespread perception among tango musicians, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, that tango was a discredited music: a genre that was denied its well-deserved recognition. For example, a comment Julio De Caro, one of tango's most influential figures, heard from his father during his teenage years gives us a sense of the situation at the time. "You will decide for yourself... what do you prefer? Be studious and get to be a good doctor... or a vulgar tanguero?" (De Caro 1964, 22).[44] Later in his autobiography, De Caro talks about the "unfavorable comments" he received from some of the "old instrumentalists" of a symphonic orchestra that had been assembled to perform some arrangements of his music. According to De Caro, the musicians felt "diminished and disrespected" by the artistic director's imposition to play tango, a genre they considered "minor" (De Caro 1964, 99).[45] In this context, images, terms, and customs commonly associated with "more respectable" traditions and the "educated" musicians that played them were often invoked with the intention to validate the status of the beleaguered genre. Europe's concert music and later jazz were two of the most common genres mentioned. Although well intended, and fundamentally accurate since tango artists continued to incorporate aspects of both traditions to their work, these attempts

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[43] The online version of the Encyclopedia Britannica defines a 'closed vascular system' as a "system in which the circulatory fluid is totally confined within a series of vessels consisting of arteries, veins, and fine linking."
[44] "Así, pues, serás tu quien decidas por ti mismo… ¿que prefieres? ¿llegar a ser un buen medico por muy estudioso… o vulgar tanguero?"
[45] "No olvidare los comentarios desfavorables, previos al ensayo, de los viejos instrumentistas, por sentirse disminuidos y avasallados al exigirles tocar "música menor.""

to increase the reputation of the genre resulted in questionable attitudes. Tango musicians and historians often talked about performances in the lofty residences of the Argentine aristocracy (Cadicamo 1977; Canaro 1957; De Caro 1964; Gobello 1980) or other "reputable" venues where "refinement, good taste, and wealth" (Canaro 1957, 108) reigned as if they were guarantees of musical excellence. The sort of musical sophistication people commonly tied to "cultured" forms got quickly associated with the social group that commonly organized and attended those musical events: the aristocracy. It is not a coincidence that Juan Carlos Cobian, one of tango's earliest revolutionary figures, received the nicknamed *El Aristócrata del Tango* (Tango's Aristocrat) since, according to historian Enrique Cadicamo, he "freed tango from the last moorings of certain musical primitivism."[46] The nickname, Cadicamo continued, was fully justified by the composer's "contribution to a higher musical hierarchy..." (Cadicamo 1977, 1015).[47]

Tango performers and commentators also often referenced the names of famous composers or venerated performers associated with the classic period or the romantic era with no other intention than to gain some sense of respectability. During an interview with Raimundo Rosales, pianist Atilio Stampone remembered that during his work with the Roberto Dimas' orchestra—Stampone was fourteen at the time—he was often asked to play during the ensemble's breaks. "I played Chopin or something like that," Stampone say nonchalantly (Rosales 2008-9, 4). In the context of the article, Stampone's fleeting mention of the Polish virtuoso carried no particular significance; it was the music he actually played. For unspecified reasons, Rosales unnecessarily changed the nature of the statement when he used it as the title of the article: Atilio Stampone: *En los intervalos de la orquesta yo tocaba Chopin* (Atilio Stampone: During the orchestra's breaks, I played Chopin). Isolated in the introductory title and out of proper context, the phrase shows no other discernable intention than to flaunt Stampone's abilities. Given what the readers of a magazine specialized in tango were likely to know about Stampone's extensive professional career, boasting about his talent was completely unnecessary; even if the author considered such exercise necessary, the sole mention of Stampone's work with Leopoldo Federico or Astor Piazzolla or the fact that he had composed the music for Oscar Araiz's ballet *Tango* and Luis Puenzo's Oscar winning film *La Historia Oficial* (The Official Story) would have likely sufficed.

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[46] "liberándolo de las últimas amarras de cierto primitivismo musical."
[47] "[El apodo] tiene plena justificación en el sentido de su contribución hacia una mayor jerarquía musical..."

It was tango artist Astor Piazzolla, however, whose music got the closest to the European concert music traditions despite his conflicted relationships with the perceived superiority and implied status commonly tied to those traditions. In the 1950s, after six years as a bandoneon player and later arranger for Anibal Troilo's historic orchestra, a short experience with singer Francisco Fiorentino, and two years with his own orchestra, Piazzolla began to question his relationship with tango, abandoned the bandoneon, and turned into an "aspiring classical composer" (Azzi and Collier 2002, 95). As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1953, Piazzolla won the Fabien Sevitzky competition with his *Buenos Aires, Tres Piezas Sinfónicas* (composed in 1951) and received a scholarship from the French government to study with none other than Nadia Boulanger.[48] In Piazzolla's official website (http://www.piazzolla.org), his experience with Boulanger is presented in the following way:

> At first, Piazzolla tries to hide his tanguero past and his bandoneon work, thinking that his destiny is in classical music. This situation is quickly remedied when he opens his heart to Boulanger and he plays his tango "Triunfal" for her. From then on he receives a historic recommendation: "Astor, your classical pieces are well written, but the true Piazzolla is here, never leave it behind." (Piazzolla)

This same scene has been told and retold in innumerable versions; in most of them, however, the encounter between the Argentine composer and "his second mother," as Piazzolla took to calling Boulanger after he left Paris, was portrayed as an epiphany for the bandoneon player. The 'Boulanger affair,' however, inspired numerous questions fuelled by the conflicting nature of the accounts (Fischerman and Gilbert 2009; Honorin 2011). According to Diego Fischerman and Abel Gilbert, an examination of Boluanger's own agenda showed that she met with Piazzolla only twelve times, including their initial presentations and final farewell.[49] In fact, Fischerman and Gilbert propose that the story could have been told quite differently:

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[48] Juliette Nadia Boulanger (16 September 1887– 22 October 1979) was a French composer, conductor, and pedagogue who taught many of the leading composers and musicians of the 20th century. She also performed as a pianist and organist. According to composer and writer Ned Rorem, "[s]o far as musical pedagogy is concerned—And by extension of musical creation—Nadia Boulanger is the most influential person who ever lived" (http://www.nadiaboulanger.org).

[49] They also note that in none of Boulanger's biographies, her registered sayings, and published memoirs can one find a single mention of Piazzolla. The authors underline this point in response to an anecdote in which Piazzolla remembered how, decades after their work together, Boulanger recognized him at an airport. In Nadia Boulanger's official website we find a detailed list of the composers that over the years studied with the French pedagogue (http://www.nadiaboulanger.org/nb/amstudents.html), Astor Piazzolla is not mentioned.

> Piazzolla—could be assumed—shows her his *Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos* (Three Symphonic Movements) [this is the piece with which Piazzolla won the Sevitzky and according to biographers Susana Azzi and Simon Collier, the piece Piazzolla showed to Boulanger in their first meeting], after all the piece with which he had won a prize. Boulanger reviews it with her customary acuity, quickly detects a weak control of the large forms and the planes of the orchestra. His sources are outdated and used with more intuition than technical mastery. Boulanger is convinced that her Argentinean student, even diving into the depths of scholasticism, would have no future in a world for a selected few like that of "serious" music. (Fischerman and Gilbert 2009, 120)[50]

Regardless of what actually took place during those months in Paris, Piazzolla made sure that the name Nadia Boulanger continued to be associated with his own throughout his career. In one of his last televised interviews, part of the BBC documentary *Astor Piazzolla in Portrait*, the Argentine musician revisited the whole experience once again and concluded, in obvious reference to the French pedagogue, "I have always said that somebody behind me pushes me in life and tells me what to do, I'm sure about that" (Piazzolla 2004). Comments like this one had not other discernable intention than to attempt to validate primarily his position as a reputed composer and the artistic status of his music, but likely, tango too.

In 1932, when Julio De Caro first approached the members of the symphonic orchestra that were about to begin rehearsing some of the arrangements that have been made of his tangos, the violinist candidly said,

> Gentlemen, you who have performed so many shows, under the baton of great masters, some of you conductors yourselves, I don't know if you may be thinking that, maybe, it is irresponsible for me to dare to do this...I think that the time has come for tango to dress in the clothing that so far has not been able to; this, at least, is my first attempt, designed to prove that its humble condition, does not prevent our popular dance from being music too. (De Caro 1964, 99)[51]

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[50] "Piazzolla—podría suponerse—le muestra sus *Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos*, al fin de cuentas la obra con la que había ganado un premio. Boulanger la revisa con su acostumbrada agudeza, detecta rápidamente un flojo dominio de la grandes formas y del manejo de los planos en la orquesta. Sus fuentes son anticuadas y están utilizadas con mas intuición que dominio técnico. Boulanger se convence de que se alumno argentino, aun sumergiéndose en la profundidades de la escolástica, no tendría futuro en un mundo tan para pocos como el de la música "seria.""

[51] "Señores, ustedes que tiene en su haber tantos espectáculos, bajo la conducción de grandes maestros, como también algunos de ustedes, directores en su renglón, no se si pensaran que, a lo mejor, yo soy un irresponsable al atreverme a hacer esto…creo llegada la hora de vestir al tango con el ropaje que hasta el presente ha carecido; este, al menos, es mi primer intento, cuya finalidad será demostrar que por humilde, nuestra danza popular no deja de ser música también."

Twenty-five years later, many things had changed in tango; some, however, remained oddly unaltered. One of them was the fundamental sense of artistic inferiority underlined by the humbling words of Julio De Caro. In the liner notes of his 1957 album *Tango Moderno* (Modern Tango), Astor Piazzolla considered that,

> It was necessary to remove tango from its surrounding harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and aesthetic monotony. Raise its musical hierarchy was an irresistible impulse for me... In short, allow tango to excite and not tire both players and listeners, without ceasing to be tango, and being, more than ever, music... (quoted in Fischerman and Gilbert 2009, 139)[52]

As noted above, aspects of both the European classic period and the romantic era were highly influential for numerous tango musicians, especially throughout the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. Numerous elements tied to those traditions served as inexhaustible sources of inspiration for tango composers and arrangers since the genre's early days. The compositions of Julio De Caro or Juan Carlos Cobian, the textures of Osmar Maderna or Hector Maria Artola, the ideas of Horacio Salgán or the rhythmic and melodic borrowings of Astor Piazzolla are unmistakable tokens of this relationship. My examination of some of the references to these traditions suggests a conflicted relationship that many tango artists, historians, and writers have maintained with the so-called "cultured" or "serious" musics.

While tango's association with the musical and extra-musical implications tied to Europe's "art" music boosted the status of artists' work or the genre as a whole, these same associations were also used to do exactly the opposite, namely to criticize or minimize the "authenticity" of some tango expressions. In his autobiographical *Mis Bodas de Oro con el Tango y mis Memorias* (My golden wedding with tango and my memories), Francisco Canaro, the same composer who had previously stressed the need to musically "elevate" tango, complained about how an alleged "fantasy of erudite musicality" (Canaro 1957, 519) was corroding what he called the "true reality" of the genre (61).

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[52] "Era necesario sacar al tango de esa monotonía que lo envolvía, tanto armónica como melódica, rítmica y estética. Fue un impulso irresistible el de jerarquizarlo musicalmente…En dos palabras, lograr que el tango entusiasme y no canse al ejecutante ni al oyente, sin que deje de ser tango, y que sea, mas que nunca, música…"

Various editions of the album Tango Moderno are in circulation. The excerpt cited appears in the liners notes of the first print of the album. Interestingly, in the liner notes of a subsequent edition (D&D producciones fonográficas D 5-276-2), Piazzolla notes that "[t]he sole purpose of the OCTETO BUENOS AIRES is to renew the popular tango, maintain its essence, introduce new rhythms, new harmonies, melodies, timbres and forms, and, above all, we do not intend to make music so called cultured" (El único propósito del OCTETO BUENOS AIRES es renovar el tango popular, mantener su esencia, introducir nuevos ritmos, nuevas armonías, melodías, timbres y formas, y, sobre todo, no pretendemos hacer musía llamada culta).

Canaro was lamenting what was perceived as a trend among certain young tango players, a supposed academicism that distanced the music from its popular essence. The same fear of an apparent scholasticism that Canaro underlined in his monograph was also behind the attacks aimed at the symphonic explorations Julio de Caro and Osvaldo Fresedo attempted in the early 1930s (Sierra 1966, 82).

Canaro was certainly not the first one to voice concerns about an alleged loss in tango's "essence." Already in 1903, writer Fray Mocho warned the readership of the Buenos Aires' magazine *Caras y Caretas* that tango was no longer the "faction's banner that it was in the times of Alsina and Mitre [key political figure at the time], but mere street entertainment for idle guys. If we are not attending to its ignored death," he concluded, "we are hearing the funeral knell of the bell announcing its agony" (quoted in Del Priore 1995, 179).[53] Considering the date and the tone of the statement, music was not likely the main issue at stake for Fray Mocho. In fact, at the centre of his critique was a suspected change in the mannish attitudes many considered intrinsic to the choreo-musical expression known as tango at the time.[54] This shows that issues pertaining to tango's authenticity were already being voiced in 1903. It was around the same time, however, that concerns about drastic changes in the overall nature of the genre began to be voiced by musicians. In 1905, pianist and composer Manuel Campoamor considered if necessary to retire due to the marked changes he saw in the music. "We," he noted, "who feel tango in a very different fashion must retire to make way for new directions: for the new sensitivity" (quoted in Selles 1999, 178).[55] In the years following Campoamor's comment, throughout the final consolidation of tango as a distinct music expression, and the ensuing surfacing of stylistic variants tied to that expression, the amount and tone of concerns around ideas of authenticity changed considerably.

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[53] "Ese tango de la actualidad (1903) no es ya un pendón de bandería como en los tiempos alsinistas y mitristas, sino simple entretenimiento callejero de la muchachada ociosa y si no asistimos a su ignorada muerte, oímos el fúnebre tañido de la campana que anuncia su agonía."

[54] Mocho's words present us with a stance that most will likely associate with Jorge Luis Borges, namely the romanticization of a time when tango was the domain of knife-bearing toughs of scarce words and unyielding honour known as compadritos. While Borges' writings have been fundamental in rooting this perception in the collective consciousness of porteños, the many liberties historians and tango writers in general have taken in their depiction of compadritos' nature and character, and their involvement in genesis and early development of tango have played a considerable role in the mystification of these figures. Compadritos often worked as hired hoodlums for local politicians, especially during election time. Behind Mocho's nostalgic reference to the times of Adolfo Alsina and Bartolomé Mitre hide the close ties that existed between compadritos, tango, and politics.

[55] "Nosotros los que sentimos muy distinto el tango debemos retirarnos para dar paso a las nuevas orientaciones: a la nueva sensibilidad."

In 1929, bandoneon player and composer Juan Maglio had commented on the issue in an interview published in the magazine *El Suplemento*. He complained about the gradual lost of tango's "emotional, virile, and ardent feeling" explaining: "I think today's [1929] tango and the one we created are two very different things. The first one had soul, the other does not; it is an extremely boring tune. Today's tango is weepy and flabby; it lacks personality" (quoted in Ferrer 1996, 98).[56] Even composers who had had some of their own work mocked as intellectual extravagances had something to say about the possible dangers of the conservatory. Julio De Caro knew very well the value of music schooling. Although he did most of his learning on the bandstand, like most of his contemporaries, he recognized the importance of institutionalized music training, but he was still cautious.

> Although there is plenty of talent within the studious youth, players of great technicality; *unfortunately they remain self-absorbed in their academic approaches*, and many of them distanced from tango's true reality: phrasing, grumbling, octave-doublings, spiritual pillars that support our dance-song, in its real expression. (emphasis is mine, De Caro 1964, 61)[57]

In the early 1960s, many within the traditional tango camp revived the menace of Canaro's "fantasy of erudite musicality" in order to criticize the novel conceptualizations grouped under the banners of T*ango de Vanguarida* (Vanguard Tango) or *Tango Moderno* (Modern Tango) (Canaro 1957, 519). These attacks were aimed primarily, but not uniquely, at Astor Piazzolla, pioneering force of the vanguard movement. "I do not understand Piazzolla; it is another music,"[58] said Juan D'Arienzo to María Esther Gilio during an interview published in Gilio's collection of conversations with Aníbal Troilo (1998). Extremely popular in the 1940s, D'Arienzo's ensemble was the leading proponent of a "traditional" approach that favored rhythm and a strongly articulated pulse over melodic or harmonic nuances. Given this aesthetic lineage, his comments are not surprising. The bandleader, however, went beyond sharing his personal dislike for Piazzolla's music and later wrote, "Piazzolla is

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[56] "¿Sabe usted cual es la característica negativa de los tangos de hoy? La ausencia de un sentimiento emotivo, viril y ardiente. Creo que son dos cosas muy distintas el tango de hoy y el que nosotros creamos. Este tenia alma, el otro no la tiene, es una melodía sumamente aburrida. El tango llorón fofo de ahora carece de personalidad."
[57] "[A]unque existen buenos elementos dentro de la muchachada estudiosa, de gran tecnicismo, lamentablemente muy independizada en su ejecución académica, y muchos de ellos distanciados de la verdadera realidad del tango: fraseos, rezongos, octavados, pilares espirituales que sostienen a nuestra danza-canción, en su verdadero expresar."
[58] "No lo entiendo [Piazzolla], es otra música."

not tango… Piazzolla undoes tango" (idem, 48).[59] Even Aníbal Troilo, a revolutionary badoneon player and orchestral leader that Piazzolla esteemed greatly from a personal and musical perspective—Piazzolla had played in the bandoneon section of Troilo's legendary orchestra from 1939 to 1944—had harsh words for him. "Above all, I will say that it's a shame that all the knowledge that Astor Piazzolla possesses has not been placed in the service of what for me is the real tango.[60] All I can say is that what Astor Piazzolla does does not move me at all. I admire his work for his dedication and musicality, but as an expression of tango they tell me nothing" (emphasis is mine, quotes in Strega 2009, 76).[61] In their critiques of Piazzolla's work, neither D'Arienzo nor Troilo directly pointed to the aforementioned sense of academicism as the reason that Piazzolla's music had derailed from the path of "real tango". The wordings of their evaluations, however, are quite suggestive. D'Arienzo inability to "understand" the music or Troilo's view of Piazzolla's "knowledge" as squandered suggests that the problem was none other than the "cultured" inclinations of Piazzolla's music. Troilo had previously voiced some of the issues he had with Piazzolla's elaborate ideas during the young musician's time with the orchestra. The relationship of Troilo and Piazzolla, as arranger, is often described as mediated by a mythical eraser, la goma de borrar de Troilo (Troilo's eraser). Although no one has been able to confirm whether the legendary eraser actually existed, the story highlights the underlying issue that Troilo needed to simplify the arrangements of his pupil.[62]

Another bandoneon player and composer criticized for the intellectual leanings of his music was Piazzolla's contemporary Eduardo Rovira (1925-1980). He was a talented and prolific composer and arranger who constantly tested the limits of a genre whose traditional canon he knew well. Most of the music he produced for his various tango ensembles shows a carefully crafted balance where the tango tradition is never out of sight (listen to track 41 on the CD for another example of Rovira's work with his ensemble). Many musicians and historians, however, would agree with Roberto Martinez and Alejandro Molinari in their suggestion that Rovira's musical inquietudes were closer to "erudite music" than tango (Martinez and Molinari 2012, 313). Unfortunately, Rovira did

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[59] "Piazzolla no es tango. Piazzolla deshace el tango."

[60] "If I knew what Piazzolla does about music… I would be Beethoven," said Troilo during one of the informal conversations documented in Gilio's book (Gilio 1998, 38).

[61] "Ante todo, diré que es una pena que lo mucho que sabe Astor Piazzolla no la hay puesto al servicio de lo que para mi es el verdadero tango. Lo único que puedo decir es que lo que hace Astor Piazzolla no lo siento en absoluto. Admiro sus trabajos por la dedicación y musicalidad, pero como expresión de tango no me dicen nada."

[62] Piazzolla was not the only one who saw his arrangements changed under the simplifying power of Troilo's "eraser;" Argentino Galvan also made numerous references to the infamous object. Emilio Balcarse's arrangement of his own composition *La Bordona* was one of the few contributions to Troilo's band that managed to pass the scrutiny untouched.

not handle the negative reaction to his work well; the once-prolific composer gradually turned into a recluse and ended up distancing himself from popular genres and, soon after, from music in general.[63]

At the centre of these critiques lies a myth suggesting that those trained in the western academic tradition cannot tap into the so-called essence or soul of popular musics. In their discussion of Piazzolla's 'Boulanger affair,' Diego Fischerman and Albert Gilbert talked about this common view as based on a fantasy where the "know music" (something the according to the authors many popular musicians, and their listeners too, understand as defined solely by the condition of being literate in a Western musical sense) is given an almost magical prestige while classical musicians are anathematized as "soulless," "cold" or "mechanical"" (Fischerman and Gilbert 2009, 121).[64] In another work devoted to Astor Piazzolla, Carlos Kuri described him as an artist working in "border zones." Piazzolla, the author continued, "imposes a *visceral* dynamic in his use of the fugue or politonality. This has irritated many within the tango milieu and turned many *cultured contemporary musician* distrustful" (Kuri 2008, 79).[65] Kuri sets the figure of Piazzolla between two apparently clearly divided territories; one defined by the numerous implication that accompany the idea of a "visceral" music (e.g., instinctual, fervent, primitive?) and the other identified by the distrust "cultured" performers allegedly have for the guttural nature of the sounds coming from across the border. It has become increasingly difficult to compartmentalize musicians according to narrow and never clearly defined categories such as "popular" and "academic;" Björk performs Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Rufus Wainwright writes an opera, and artists like Daniel

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[63] The situation has certainly changed in recent decades, the plethora of expressions currently coexisting within the realm of tango point to a substantial shift in the attitudes that exists around the genre. This is the case in Buenos Aires, but also in other locales with vibrant tango scenes like Paris, Rotterdam or Berlin. This is not to say that issues of 'authenticity' have completely disappeared, they have not, and they doubtfully will, especially in Buenos Aires. I have previously cited some of objectionable terms tango aficionados have recently used in reference to the so-called tango electrónico. I have also heard musicians in the Argentine capital talk about a certain compartmentalization within the tango scene. The situation was described to me by a well-established bandoneon player who talked about a steady decline in calls for gigs where the traditional repertoire was to be played once he began to establish himself as a composer of "not-so-traditional tango." It should be noted that, in contrast to this described scenario, numerous musicians maintain what it looks like a very healthy balance between projects covering much of tango's aesthetic spectrum.

[64] "En la *escena Boulanger* hay una fantasía recurrente entre los músicos de tradición popular, que a la vez rechazan y envidian las maneras del músico académico. Mientras se le confiere un prestigio casi mágico al "saber música"—lo que para muchos músicos populares, también, para sus oyentes, remite únicamente a dominar la lectoescritura musical europea—se anatemiza con frecuencia a los *músicos clásicos* como "sin alma", "fríos" o "mecánicos"."

[65] "Piazzolla trabaja en zonas de frontera; impone una dinámica visceral en medio de recurso a la fuga o de un recurso politonal, Esto ha causado irritación al tango y desconfianza al music culto contemporáneo.

Barenboim or Yo-Yo Ma rejoice in the idea of recoding albums of Argentine tango and Brazilian *Bossa Nova*.[66]

When Sibila Camps came up with the odd-sounding 'homogeneous chamber popular music' in order to qualify the work of the BCM trio, she was not aiming to inform her readers about the similarities that existed between the dynamic and performance attitudes of the trio and those of traditional chamber ensembles. Contrary to what some of her colleagues were doing—attempting to raise the status of the music through reference to established European musics— Camps' dual reference to the western tradition and popular music was intended to discredit the work of the ensemble by classifying it as neither as one nor the other. The trio is presented as musically uncommitted to either side. According to Camps, the trio is a kaleidoscope that produces forms, but unrecognizable ones. "Maybe this is the limit of every attempt of originality… the concealment of the code that supports any artistic expression and, consequently, sets it away from the understanding of the public" (*El Clarín*, October 26, 1986).[67] In the article, Camps criticized the trio for not maintaining the original formal schemes of the chosen compositions in their novel arrangements. A closer examination of the arrangements played by the ensemble would show the author that the overall structures of the original compositions were not altered. At any rate, what Camps was actually condemning were the liberties that the trio took with the most identifiable elements of the compositions, their melodies—Camps' is the only article I found where it is hinted that listeners had problems recognizing the works chosen by the trio. Issues pertaining to the form of the pieces performed were not the only ones underscored by an author, who clearly did not appreciate the individual craft of the musicians or the final product of their collaborative efforts. "What Mosalini, Beytelmann, and Caratini offer is definitely intelligent music, music that accompanies sentiments that eventually coincide, but music that does not arouse them" (Idem.).[68] The author did not present the elaborateness of the music and its emotional essence as intrinsically incompatible, however, as numerous times through tango's history, those particular aspects were set in antagonistic association to the detriment of one of them, on this case, tango's emotional substance.

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[66] In 1995 Daniel Baremboim recorded *Mi Buenos Aires Querido* with Argentine bandoneon player Rodolfo Mederos and double bassist Héctor Console. In 1997 Yo-Yo Ma recorded *The Soul of Tango: The Music of Astor Piazzolla* and in 2003, the French cellist recorded *Obrigado Brazil*.

[67] "Quizá sea éste el limite de toda intención de originalidad: el ocultamiento del código que sostiene a cualquier expresión artística y que, en consecuencia, la aléjele la comprensión del publico..."

[68] "Lo de Mosalini-Beytelmann-Caratini es, sin duda una música inteligente, que acompaña sentimientos eventualmente coincidentes, pero que no los provoca."

In essence, Camps' argument was similar to the one Francisco Canaro had voiced three decades before; from an aesthetic perspective, the musics targeted by Camps and Canaro stand miles apart, but the aim of their critique remained the same. The issue at the centre of Camps' critique can also be identified in the disqualifying appraisal of the ensemble's work that Alexadra Weiland offered in her 1996 monograph *Tango À Paris*. According to Weiland, the music of the BCM trio "has lost its essence and "*degenerated*" into musical forms that do not share much with the old tango" (Italics are mine, Weiland 1996, 51).[69] Given Weiland's background as a dance scholar, I consider it safe to assume that there are marked differences between her views on what constitutes the essence of tango and those of a music scholar or a tango musician. These are expected differences resulting from the dissimilar conceptual and methodological perspectives assumed by investigators focusing on two different aspects of the same expression. In her description, however, Weiland does not present the music under scrutiny as valid tango. She suggests that something has been taken away from it, something that seems unrecoverable, hence leaving us with a degenerated version of tango. Weiland's stance has a lineage of its own among some dancers that consider tango as defined by its function as dance music. The following is part of a conversation María Esther Giglio captured between two tango aficionados waiting in line to access the theatre where a vigil for the recently deceased Aníbal Trolio had been organized. The dialogue helps to contextualize Weiland's stance. The exchange started when someone announced the famous composer, pianist, and bandleader Osvaldo Pugliese was arriving.

> — "Maestro, Maestrito (spanish diminutive of maestro)… Pugliese is all we have left."
> — Another member of the crowd replied "and Piazzolla?
> — "Jeez, he is totally out of the question."
> — "Stop there because when Piazzolla wants to play a tango…"
> — "*Tango is for dancing. If you cannot dance to it, it is useless*"
> (emphasis is mine; Giglio 1998, 51)[70]

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[69] "[L]a musique a perdu de son essence pour « dégénérer » dans des formes musicales qui n'ont plus grand rapport avec ce vieux tango."

[70] — "Maestro, Maestrito... Pugliese es lo único que nos queda."
— "Pero no faltaba el que volvió a decir: "¿Y Piazzolla?
— "Pero que tiene que ver."
— "Para la mano que cuando el Gato [nickname Troilo gave to Piazzolla] quiere hacer sonar un tango…"
— "El tango es para bailar. Si no se puede bailar no sirve."

In her description, Weiland does not specify what in the music has allegedly robbed tango of its essence. Her perception, however, points once again to the elaborateness of the music as the cause of the problem. Weiland approaches the music of other tango musicians who have played in Paris, artists with highly contrasting approaches to the genre, in the same vein. There is no link between Juan Cedrón, Astor Piazzolla, the BCM trio, and the older Parisian tango she argues. In effect, as noted in the previous chapter, from a musical perspective, Weiland is right, there is no clear link between those periods of tango activity and the musics that characterized them. Such disconnect, however, cannot be equated with a so-called lost in the essence of the tangos of these artists and a concomitant degeneration or deterioration of the tradition. Weiland's view cannot be taken as common to most dancers. Although I would have to say that during my informal conversations in milongas in Europe, Argentina, and North America, I have encountered a surprisingly large amount of dancers that only interact with tango when dancing in milogas or *practicas*,[71] hence only know the traditional repertoire played in those situations. In contrast, most musicians don't see the approaches as opposed to each other. The words of Eduardo Rovira encapsulate what I consider to be the current perception of most musicians on this issue. "Our tango and the "other" tango are not opposed, are complementary. There is no contradiction, and there is no point in discussing trends. That is a tango for dances, thought for "the feet"; ours is to listen, it stands beyond the pure rhythm and melody: it has harmony and counterpoint" (*El Mundo*, December 5, 1986). [72]

Tango *Porteño* and Tango *Nómade*

Under all the critiques, commentaries, and opinions presented throughout this chapter lie the very thorny issues inherent in the establishment of the sanctioned conventions that determine our various understandings of a genre like tango. As evidenced by the tone of some of the statements examined here, views on what defines genuine tango have triggered highly contentious disputes throughout the genre's history. As Andrea Marsili notes,

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[71] As the name states, a *practica* is a practice. It is organized as a casual milonga where people get together to practice their tango dancing skills, reinforce material learned in lesson or try new steps. They are characterized by a much more relaxed ambiance where attendees do not dress up or expect the etiquette characteristic of most milongas..

[72] "Nuestro tango y el "otro" no se oponen, se complementan. No existe contradicción, ni tiene sentido discutir tendencias. Aquel es un tango para bailar, pensado "para los pies"; el nuestro es para escuchar, esta mas allá del puro compás y melodía: tiene armonía y contrapunto."

> In tango, the act of constantly judging if a given expression is tango or not is part of its history. In fact, judgments or discussion about the *tanguidad* of certain expressions or about their level of authenticity have been permanent part of the genre's history since the Old Guard. (Marsili 2012, 22)[73]

The opinions cited in this chapter alone suffice to show the extent to which perceptions about what shapes tango's so-called essence could differ. Fray Mocho tied the legitimacy of the expression to a particular thuggish attitude; Francisco Canaro talked about a criollo music essence that was corroded by a "fantasy of erudite musicality"; not far from Fray Mocho's stance, Maglio linked authenticity to a romanticized sense of masculinity; in his rant against Piazzolla, D'Arienzo focused on his ability to "understand" the music, a comment that aligns with Canaro's in the suggested need for the sense of simplicity Canaro had linked with the criollo tradition; for Weiland and the unidentified individual waiting to pay his last respects to Troilo, it was all about the dance, if you cannot dance to it, it is useless or, in Weiland's terms, a degeneration.

In many instances, the elements upon which musicians, historians, and the general public have based their individual assessment of the "authenticity" of a given tango expression are not linked to the expression itself, but emerge from the mythology that has been created around the genre. The view shared by Fray Mocho and Maglio of tango as a tradition defined in part by the sort of masculine attitudes emerging from highly romanticized views of the compadritos is a clear example of this. As noted before, numerous Argentine intellectuals had embraced perceptions of this kind; it was the work of Jorge Luis Borges, however, that secured the image of tango as a practice of knife-carrying men of unyielding honour in the collective consciousness of Argentines, especially porteños.

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[73] "Dans le tango, le fait de juger constamment ce qui est du tango et ce qui ne l'est pas fait partie de son historie. En effet, les jugements ou discussions sur la *tanguidad* de certaines propositions ou sur leur niveau d'authenticité ont existe de manière historique et permanente depuis la *Vielle Garde*."

First stanza of Jorge Luis Borges' *Alguien le dice al tango* (Someone tells tango)

Tango que he visto bailar	Tango that I have seen danced
contra un ocaso amarillo	against a yellow sunset
por quienes eran capaces	for those who were capable
de otro baile, el del cuchillo.	of other dance, that of the knife.
Tango de aquel Maldonado	Tango of that Maldonado
con menos agua que barro.	with less water than mud,
Tango silbado al pasar	tango whistled while passing
desdel el pescante del barro	from the mud's davit.

Although we know that these embellished narratives need to be approached with considerable reservation, they remain encrusted in a number of current perceptions of tango's reality; in *The meaning of Tango: The Story of the Argentinean Dance* (2007), Christine Denniston writes,

> Buenos Aires, especially in the poorer suburbs, was a dangerous place where men carried knives the size of short-swords in their belts. A macho, independent front was a necessity. *Anything else was a sign of weakness*. Many of the men must have found the loneliness and isolation almost intolerable. *The only place where they could express their softness—the sweet, tender port of their nature—was either in the arms of a prostitute, or dancing tango* (emphasis is mine; Denniston 2007, 14).

Depictions similar to Denniston's can also be found in the lyrics of numerous tangos. Prostitutes, compadritos, shady origins, and the underlying sensation that, as the local aphorism states, "*todo tiempo pasado fue mejor*" (all time past has been better) have been some of the most recurrent themes explored by tango lyricists since the 1920s.

Aspects associated with tango's mythology can also be recognized behind some of the concerns voiced around what is lost in the genuine character of the music. The criollo essence that Canaro mentioned is one example. At the centre of his critique was a perceived sense of unnecessary complexity, something that could be possibly addressed and reworked if described in rhythmic, harmonic or counterpointal terms. The criollo essence, however, brings into the mix a whole set of non-musical considerations linked to romanticized ideas about the personality of the criollo and its context. Something similar occurs with some of the terms used to describe that particular *je ne sais quoi* that guarantees the piece genuine *tangoness*. *Le falta barrio* (he/she is lacking neighborhood) is a

term used in order to tell that someone's music is missing that mythical roughness that is inherent to tango. It is in *el barrio* where one made its lifelong friends; where one learned about love and its misgivings; where those one loves live and will likely die; it is the place where, according to many tangos, one is likely to return after years of happy and heartbreaking experiences. According to José Edmundo Clemente,

> The barrio is the enlightened sidewalk of our first games, the benighted corned of the lover's rendezvous, the site of our first illusions and, perhaps, of our first disenchantment. The neighborhood is the childhood's block that has widened in our memories. Each with its own language, but always packed with emotions. (quoted in Mina 2007, 57)[74]

According to *le falta barrio* critique, tango cannot exist if we don't feel in the music the emotions that tied to those fundamental life experiences taking place at the barrio.

One of the most interesting terms commonly used to judge a performance of tango is *mugre*. In the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española, *mugre* is defined as *suciedad grasienta* (greasy dirtiness). In Argentina, however, *mugre* depicts something that is beyond dirty—as if a considerable amount of effort was needed to reach that level of dirtiness. Among tango musicians, the term refers to a desired if not required quality in the music. The phrase *le falta mugre (*is lacking mugre) is in essence similar to *le falta barrio*. While the lack of *barrio* commonly points to the attitude of the person, the lack of *mugre* is used to characterize a similar lack of in the musical product. The term could be used in reference to the quality of a musician's sound or the overall performance. Although complicated due to its many numerous meanings, the musical implications of the term can be identified (and will be considered in chapter 5). Most of the semantic weight of the term, however, rests on all that lies beyond even the most detailed musical description.

[74] "El barrio es la vereda iluminada de nuestros primeros juegos, la esquina anochecida de la cita amorosa, el sitio de nuestras primeras ilusiones, tal vez, de nuestro primer desengaño. El barrio es la cuadra de la infancia que se ha ensanchada en nuestro recuerdo. Cada uno lo dice confirme a la medida de su lenguaje, pero siempre con la totalidad de su emoción."

Conclusion

The terms often used in relation to the qualitative nature of tango expressions carry numerous meanings, many of them falling beyond the purely musical. This presents a complex scenario. At the same time, despite their idiosyncrasies and complexities, almost all the critiques and comments pertaining to the legitimacy of a given tango expression can be placed in one of two major categories. One is the traditional camp: in this group compositions follow, not without some deviation, the set of sanctioned conventions that define traditional tango in his homeland. The other is the "non-traditional" camp: in this group compositions generally exhibit elements, traits or conceptualizations uncommon within the tango tradition. As I have suggested in this chapter, the alleged incompatibility between the popular vs. scholastic approaches to music has played a big role in the processes informing these aesthetic splits. In his book *Tango Nomade*, Ramon Pelinksi builds upon these overtly simplistic categories and offers a more elaborated set of concepts that have opened interesting ways to deal with the complex realities of contemporary tango. Pelinski understands the *tango porteño tradicional* (traditional tango porteño) as a territorialized tango, rooted culturally in its own history and geographically in its place of origin (Pelinski 2000, 29).[75] On the other side, he situates *El Tango Nómade* (Nomadic tango) as deterritorialized, "intercultural in nature" and defined by the "stylistic traits and strategies of innovation" resulting from the musical interactions pertinent to its context of reterritorialization (Pelinksi 2000, 33).[76] These two categories provide the basis for the analyses presented in the following chapter.

[75] "El Tango Porteño tradicional es el tango territorializado, arraigado culturalmente en su propia historia y geográficamente en su lugar de origen."
[76] "Es por naturaleza intercultural: su movimiento de deterritorializacion le lleva a seccionar rasgos estilísticos y estrategias de innovación en el contacto con las culturas musicales con los que se reterritorializa, reconociéndose en ellas."

Chapter 5
Territorialized and Deterritorialized Tango

This chapter provides a musical analysis of tango based on two categories first introduced by Ramón Pelinski (2000): "territorialized" and "deterritorialized" tango. The territorialized tango is the tango of Buenos Aires (*tango porteño*). It is a tango "culturally rooted in its own history and geographically anchored in its place of origin."[1] The deterritorialized tango (*tango nómade*), on the other hand, is "intercultural in nature," defined by "stylistic traits and strategies of innovation"[2] resulting from the musical interactions pertinent to its context of reterritorialization (Pelinksi 2000, 33). This distinction offers us a practical way to begin untangling the complex realities shaping the evolution of tango in non-Argentine locations in the last few decades. According to Pelinski, when uprooted from its place of origin and in a new sociocultural context, tango enters into contact with a series of music traditions that eventually begin to inform its reterritorialized development, thus undergoing a series of changes that affect its "syntax," "public images," and "significations" (Pelinski 2000, 38).[3]

While common, these changes should not be seen as the unavoidable results of the tango's reterritorialization. In her study of the impact of exile on the musical production of Juan Carlos Cedrón and Gustavo Beytelmann, Mirta Wymerszberg considers exile as a "catalyst" in "a process of musical renovation" (Wymerszberg 2001, 4).[4] As suggested by the author, exile can and often does spur processes of artistic transformation. Wymerszberg, however, over stresses the capacity of exile to exert changes at the musical level. It is not uncommon for musicians in exile to cling to traditional models. In her own work Wymerszberg quotes Cedrón as recognizing that his music had not changed after he relocated to France in the early 1970s:[5] "I played a tango of Piazzolla with [Georges] Moustaki, after that, he [Moustaki] sang a rumba that he had arranged, but always in our

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[1] "Arraigado culturalmente en su propia historia y geográficamente en su lugar de origen."
[2] "Rasgos estilísticos y estrategias de innovación."
[3] "El tango ha sobrellevado cambios que han afectado tanto su sintaxis como su presentación publica y sus significaciones."
[4] "El exilio como catalizador de un proceso de renovación musical."
[5] After the military coup of 1976, Cedron and his music were proscribed due to his leftist affiliation. After a short tour through Europe, Cedron decided to stay in France.

own style. *I cannot do anything else*" (my emphasis, 39).[6] In short, exile does not guarantee the sort of changes described by Pelinski; they are, ultimately, the product of the individual inquietudes of musicians who, for personal, artistic, or commercial reasons, considered it necessary to explore new expressive paths within an area of shared cultural signification.

The composers of the pieces at the centre of this analysis (i.e., Gustavo Beytelmann and Juan José Mosalini, Tomas Gubitsch, Andrea Marsili, Gerardo Jerez LeCam) have all approached tango differently, each in their own way—not in search of models to follow, but an area of emotional and artistic inspiration. Their relationships with the Argentine tradition, however, are all marked by a shared sense of deliberate openness towards the genre. These works are the result of an accumulation of the needs and desires of artists who, after having identified new possibilities in the cultural heterogeneity of their novel surroundings, acted upon them.

A "controlled estrangement" from tango's tradition

Music can be used to preserve aspects of a former cultural identity and "can also be used to create new forms which are indicative of the issues facing the immigrant, and which help in dealing with a new life in the place of settlement and in the articulation of new identities" (Baily 2005, 217). Interestingly, these novel forms are often closely linked to the same traditions musicians embrace when attempting to maintain a former sense of cultural identity. What changes is the way in which that particular cultural practice is treated. In their new context, musicians don't usually ignore all the rules and customs that have historically defined the expression or expressions that have shaped their individual and artistic identities at home. Rather, they engage in a process of selective disregard for the conventions that have historically guided these forms in their place of origin. In the process of framing the eclectic nature of their musics within a given practice such as tango, musicians focus their attention on a series of key characteristics that anchors their work in a specific cultural terrain while allowing for the flexibility required by their music ideas. Philosopher Jürgen Habermas' phrase "controlled estrangement," offers an interesting way to visualize this complex process (quoted in Dahlhaus 1983, 55).

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[6] "…el estilo del cuarteto siempre es el mismo. Lo acompañe a Moustaki en un tango de Piazzolla, después el cantó una rumba que el arreglo, pero siempre con el color nuestro. No puedo hacer otra cosa."

Throughout the 1980s Argentine musicians in exile—some of them young and having no previous or particularly strong ties with tango, others, experienced *tangueros*—turned (or returned) to the genre in order to revisit, create, or reconstruct a sense of personal, social, or communal identity through their performances and compositions. Most of these individuals, however, were cautious in their approach to tango; they turned to a music that had much to offer from an artistic and personal perspective while distancing themselves from the prejudiced attitudes commonly tied to the genre in Argentina, the same stances that in the 1960s and 1970s had deterred their colleagues in Argentina from engaging with the genre in novel ways.

In Argentina, general attitudes toward tango were considerably different in the late 1990s and 2000s. In the mid-1990s, after decades of a general disregard for the tango, a renewed interest in the genre began to develop among many young Argentines. Given this new scenario, most musicians, including those who moved to France in the late 1990s or early 2000s, were less guarded in their general approach to the genre. At the same time, the musicians who immigrated to France at around that time also estranged themselves [albeit, in a controlled fashion] from the models that had historically governed the conceptualization of the genre.[7]

The main objective of the musical analysis provided in this chapter is to shed light on the various ways artists reached the balance implied in the idea of a controlled estrangement. While furthering our understanding of the processes allowing them to navigate the historical boundaries of tango in order to accommodate their own musical and expressive needs, the analysis examines some of the particularities that allow tango to accommodate widening arrays of musical influences and still maintain its recognizable core. Before turning to the evolution of these new tango expressions, I provide an overview of the key elements that have historically defined common perceptions of tango.

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[7] Interestingly, in the last decade a similar process has been taking place in tango's own homeland of Argentina. Musicians have created enlightening possibilities through active artistic collaborations and novel explorations. The result has been a thriving context marked by a healthy heterogeneity in which numerous stylistic approaches cohabit with no apparent friction. In fact, it is not uncommon to see musicians moving comfortably throughout the wide stylistic palette currently shaping tango's reality in Buenos Aires.

Overview of tango's key characteristics

Tango has assumed numerous and varied shapes throughout its relatively short existence.[8] As a consequence, any attempt to suggest a series of key defining characteristics requires narrowing the temporal span of the examination. For example, if we were to follow historian José Gobello's perspective, tango had already gone as far as was musically possible in 1946, with Argentino Galván's arrangement of the tango *"Recuerdos de Bohemia*" for the orchestra of Aníbal Troilo: "Galván made of "*Recuerdos de Bohemia*" a short concert. He added, subtracted, and duplicated the extension of the original piece (listen to track 42 on the CD). He went as far as was possible without tango losing its name. With the Galván/Troilo version of "*Recuerdos de Bohemia*" we reach the culmination of tango as music…" (Gobello 1980, 46).[9]

There is some validity to Gobello's argument. Given the set of conventions that defined the aesthetic of Troilo's ensemble and tango in general, Galván's arrangement was testing the limits of the genre. If we follow Gobello, however, all the different approaches that emerged after Galván's 1946 arrangement of *Recuerdos de Bohemia* fall outside the realm of tango.

My analysis extends beyond 1946 since I consider it necessary to address some of the elements that characterized the work of a few composers of the so-called *tango de vanguardia* period, especially Astor Piazzolla and Horacio Salgán. I do consider, however, that it was during the two decades between the early 1920s and the zenith of the golden era in the 1940s that the musical backbone of tango was shaped. Hence, that period will be the main focus of this chapter.

Given the multiple musical and non-musical variables that shaped tango throughout its various periods, a comprehensive examination of all its musical parameters falls outside the scope of this work. But the question arises, then, as to which particular parameters should be selected. There are certain elements that, while important in the analysis of certain musical forms, are irrelevant when dealing with tango. The idea of growth, for example, is one of the main categories of analysis found in Jan La Rue's "Basic Components for Analytic Hypotheses," a chart included in the analyst's *Guidelines for Style Analysis* (La Rue, 1970). The concept was central to the ethos of the late

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[8] From a purely musical perspective, around a century elapsed between the initial consolidation of the genre in the early 1900s and its current forms.

[9] "Galván hizo de *Recuerdos de Bohemia* un pequeño concierto. Sumó, restó, duplicó la extensión de la obra original. Llego hasta donde se podía llegar sin que el tango perdiera si nombre. Con la versión Galván/Troilo de *Recuerdos de Bohemia* culmina el tango música…"

classical aesthetic La Rue had in mind when writing his work (e.g., Late Beethoven/Mahler). But growth, as understood within La Rue's framework, is not really an applicable category when it comes to most tango compositions. In contrast, a topic such as tempo flexibility, a feature of central importance to the expressive quality of tango, is not even considered by La Rue. The set of elements chosen as the main focus of the analysis and the depth with which these elements are examined responds to what the investigator is trying to communicate about the music under analysis.

The objective in this chapter is not to present a taxonomical classification of harmonic patterns, rhythmic schemes, and melodic characteristics in order to produce an unequivocal definition of tango as a genre. While some of these defining characteristics (and how they have changed over time) are considered, this chapter focuses primarily on the performance practices responsible for tango's characteristic sound—what Carlos Vega called *las maneras de hacer* (the ways of doing) that identify a particular tradition (Vega 1944, 1955). I argue that what allows us to experience the works analyzed below within the realm of tango is not to be found in the melodies, harmonies or rhythmic patterns used, but in the ways these features are "musicalized." Pelinski's words offer useful support here for my approach:

> In tango, there are specific manners of performance that communicate the "tango emotion" in music, without which it is impossible to recognize it as tango. These are idiomatic mannerisms of tango performance—assimilated by means of the performer's proficiency—that constitute concrete ways of playing which respond to the "habitus" of the interpreter; mental schemes that are, in turn, the product of the interiorization of tango by means of its sociocultural practice, and function as organizing principles of its production. It is clear that these manners of interpretation do not need to be graphically represented in order to be able to become sonoric actualizations. (Pelinski 2003, 46)[10]

No single music feature can unify the various stylistic approaches that have existed throughout the genre's history. In the same way that tango's harmonic language, formal structures, and rhythmic textures have changed over time, the ways musicians interpret the music have also changed. Despite marked changes in the performance practices of tango over the decades, musicians

[10] "Il y a dans le tango des modalités e'execution spécifiques sans lasquelles on ne peut reconnaître qu'il s'e agit d'un tango, et qui communiquent l'émotion *tanguéra*. Il s'agit de modalités idiomatiques de l'interpretation du tango, interiorisées par la compétence de l'interprète, que constituent des façons de jouer concrètes qui répondent a un 'habitus' de l'interprète, des schémas mentaux, qui sont, a leur tour, le produit de l'interiosisation du tango à travers sa practique socio-culturelle et qui fonctionnent comme des principes organisateurs de sa production. Il est clair que ces modealités d'interpretation n'ont pas besoin d'être l'objet d'une représentation grapique pour pouvoir devenir de actualizsations sonores."

have shared an accumulation of practical knowledge that links all these expressions. During one of my field conversations, for example, I asked the bandoneon player and composer Pablo Mainetti about the various sets of interpretative skills required to approach some of his most "non-traditional" tangos.[11] His response underlines how much of the *tangoness* of such works comes from the members of his ensemble:[12]

> Where they [the members of the ensemble] find a trace of tango, they exploit it. It is not rational, they just do it…. In the middle of a segment they encounter a recognizable cell and they clutch to it." (Mainetti, conversation with the author, November 20th 2011)[13]

The instinctual processes Mainetti describes of recognizing, exploiting, and clutching are precisely what I want to "get at" in my analysis.

As Charles Seeger once pointed out, "Music notation does not tell us as much about how music sounds as how to make it sound. Yet no one can make it sound as the writer of the notation intended unless in addition to a knowledge of the tradition of writing he has also a knowledge of the oral (or better, aural) tradition associated with it" (Seeger 1958, 186). The oral knowledge Seeger referenced is, in my view, what materializes the *tangoness* we can identify in the work of the contemporary composers featured in this dissertation. My objective is to shed light on what for them and for their listeners shapes that knowledge. My analysis draws from the work of numerous scholars (Novati et al. 1980; Cepitelli 2006; Fain 2010; Gallo 2011; García Brunelli 2008; Khoan 1995, 1996; Marsili 2012; Salgán 2001, 2008; Peralta 2008). Their publications, theses, and, in some cases personal advice, have and continue to be enlightening. My numerous conversations with listeners, musicians, and composers in Europe and South America have also been invaluable.

Tango Porteño

In his article *Tango and Jazz — a Cultural Exchange*, Johannes Feldmann-Bürgers points to a number of similarities between the South and North American genres:

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[11] I was specifically asking about the various compositions included in his 2011 *Partes de la suma*.
[12] He was referring to violinist Leonardo Ferreyra, pianist Hernán Possetti, double bassist Daniel Falasca, and guitarist German Martínez.
[13] "En donde encuentran un poco de tango, lo potencian! Ya no es racional, les sale… En medio de una sección, encuentran una célula reconocible y los tipos se agarran…"

> …first, the etymologies of either the word "tango" and "jazz" are much debated. Both musical genres were born at the end of the 19th century in port-towns—tango in Buenos Aires [and Montevideo], jazz in New Orleans—in a melting-pot of people and cultures in similar social environments. Tango, as jazz, was influenced by different kinds of music, Afro-American as well as European. (Feldmann-Bürgers 1996, 170)

In addition, artists in both camps followed a common creative process in order to generate a considerable part of the two genres' traditional corpuses, namely, individual or collective renderings of previously composed compositions,[14] what jazz players call "standards" (no analogous term exists among tango musicians).[15] During tango's early stages, this increasing body of shared "tunes" allowed makeshift ensembles to stage performances without previous preparation. While these early "tango standards" were passed from musician to musician orally, sales of sheet music during the first decade of the twentieth century in Buenos Aires suggest that the printed format rapidly became a significant mechanism of distribution.[16]

This process of transmission and performance began to popularize a series of pieces of marked simplicity that, over time, would set the foundations of tango's characteristic repertoire. Arrangements of these "standards" gradually increased in complexity and new compositions were added, but these works have remained in the repertoire of tango artists until the present day. Tangos such as "Unión Cívica" (D. Santa Cruz, 1904), "El Esquinazo" (Angel Villoldo, 1905), "Derecho Viejo" (Eduardo Arolas, 1917), and "A la gran muñeca" (Jesús Venura 1920) have been arranged and rearranged by hundreds of artists of different aesthetic lineages throughout the history of the genre. For this initial analysis, I have focused primarily on different versions of several of these "tango standards."

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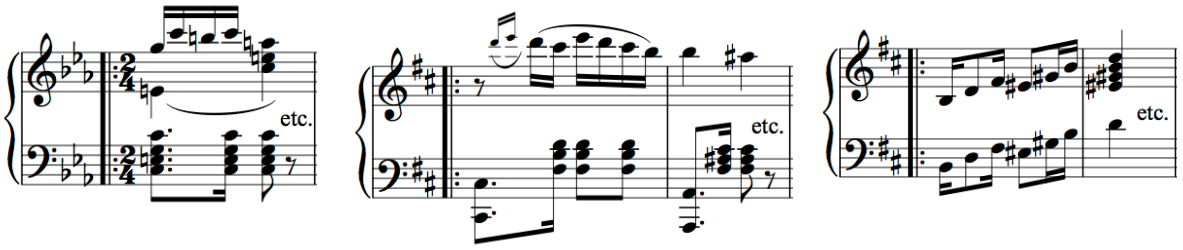
[14] I consider an individual rendering an improvised versioning by a soloist or an arranger's adaptation for an ensemble. A collective rendering, on the other hand, I understand as an impromptu performance by a duo, trio or larger ensemble.
[15] Mathieu Cepitelli also addressed this point. According to him, tango, like the majority of occidental popular musics, is the product of a chain of musical or creative production (*chaîne de production du musical où la création)* (Cepitelli 2006, 61). Cepitelli points to the various "moments" (see Cugny 2001) that define the production of a tango: composition, arrangement, and interpretation.
[16] In *El tango en la sociedad porteña – 1880-1920*, we learn that by the end of the 1910s, *El Caburé*, a tango by Arturo Vicente de Bassi, sold 100,000 copies (Lamas and Binda 1998, 141). To put this number into context, we can note that the population of Buenos Aires at the beginning of the century is estimated as at around a million inhabitants. During an interview with the Bates brothers, Enrique Saborido alleged that his tango *La Morocha* (1905) sold 250,000 copies (Hector and Luis Bates 1936, 319). Lamas and Binda consider Saborido's estimation an exaggeration intended as an advertising stunt (Lamas and Binda 1998, 141).

Form

According to the meticulous analysis presented by musicologists Jorge Novati and Inés Cuello in the *Antología*, early tango compositions were generally structured in three parts, less frequently in two, and rarely in four. These sections were self-contained such that each segment began and concluded the exposition of a finalized musical thought (Novati and Cuello 1980, 51).[17] The sections were also separated by a double bar.[18] In most of these early compositions, the length of each section was sixteen measures, achieved by repeating an eight-measure phrase that was often subdivided into two four-measure statements.

The analysis presented in the *Antología* shows that, in some cases, this binary subdivision of the segments finds its lowest common denominator in a two beat motive. Novati and Cuello these motives of two to four beats the "generating nucleus" (*el nucleo generador*), i.e., the nucleus that initiates the compositional process and organizes the structure of tango.

Figure 5.1 "Generating nucleuses" (*nucleos generadores*). J. Novati and I. Cuello



5.1.a Short Motive
J. Maglio - *Margot* (2nd section)
1917

5.1.b Long Motive
P. Aragón - *El Talar* (2nd section)
1896

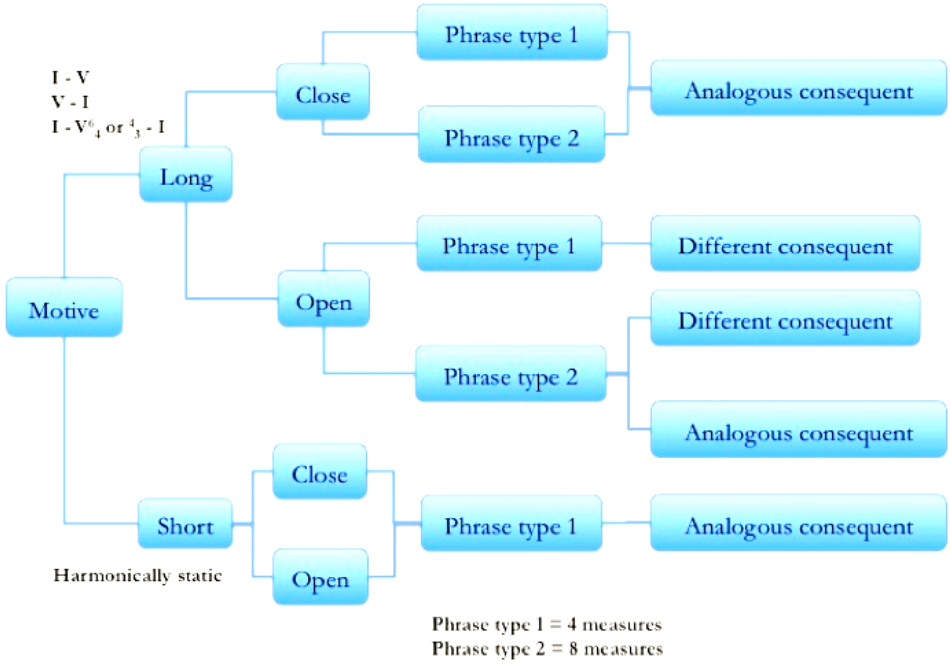
5.1.c Motive of three accented pulses
A. Bardi - *Lorenzo* (2nd section)
1916

[17] "Cada parte comienza y concluye la exposición de un pensamiento música acabado."

[18] Recordings of popular compositions by different ensembles show that there is not much deviation in terms of the way in which these sections were commonly arranged. Let's take, for example, five versions of the famous tango "La Cumparsita" by five different orchestras. In a recording from 1943, Aníbal Troilo organizes the three sections of the piece in the following manner: ABACAA (listen to track 43 on the CD). In a recording of Ricardo Tanturri's orchestra from the 1940s (listen to track 44 on the CD), the sections are presented in a similar fashion, just as they are in the version recorded by *El Sexteto Major* in 1984 (listen to track 45 on the CD). In Osmar Maderna's version, recorded in 1950, the formal scheme is ABBAA (listen to track 46 on the CD), while in Juan D' Arienzo's 1937 version (listen to track 47 on the CD), the structure is ABACAAA. Despite the numerous similarities that exist among these formal arrangements, the way in which the material was treated within each of these sections varies considerably from ensemble to ensemble.

The authors categorize these motives according to both their lengths (short [two beats] and long [four beats]) (Figure 5.1) and their sense of audible openness or closure. Long, closed motives are perceived as a complete, resolved music statement. On the other hand, a long, open motive is one calling for a necessary and complementary response (54).[19] The authors recognize the subjective nature of this latter category, but identify a few of the characteristics common to open motives: they often end on the 9th or 6th scale degree; they show the highest point of tension on the last accent of an ascending motive; and they are structured over three accented pulses and end on the last one (55). Figure 5.2 shows the motivic compositional process set in motion by the "generating nucleuses."

Figure 5.2 Graphic representation of J. Novati and I. Cuello's model[20]



According to Novati and Cuello, this motive-based method of composition and the "generating nucleuses" that set it into motion were one of early tango's distinguishing characteristics. This led to their description of tango as "a genre where complex procedures of elaboration are usually absent…[tango] is defined as a species…by its motives, whose mere utterance prefigures that which

[19] Openness and closeness are not considered when dealing with short motives since they do not change the outcome of the resulting phrase (Figure 5.2).

[20] The graphic representation presents a composite of a series of the tables published by Jorge Novati and Inés Cuello in the *Antologia*.

enables their identification" (Novati and Cuello 1980, 53).[21] Esteban Buch underlines the defining role these motives, "the primary role of the subject is emphasized when establishing the identity of a piece of music as tango…" (Buch 2012, 31).[22]

Novati and Cuello's examination indicates a formulaic method of composition that, according to musicologist Pablo Kohan, limited the expressive possibilities of some early tango composers. According to Kohan, the fact that the fundamental segments shaping the structures of early tangos showed little to no variation when it came to their lengths is what prevented "the development of the material in the manner characteristic of the European academic tradition" (Kohan 2010, 35).[23]

In the years following the 1920s, tango underwent numerous changes that gradually began to disrupt the overall homogeneity that characterized the genre until that time. Among these transformations, there was a marked change in the overall approach to melodic design. There was as growing number of compositions where the melodies of the sections were through composed. In other cases, some of the new tangos, while still conceived as instrumental pieces, revealed song-like characteristics that stood in clear contrast to the cell-based melodies of the previous decade. Concomitantly, a more complex style of melodic writing developed among composers such as bandoneonist Pedro Laurenz, violinist Julio de Caro, and pianist Juan Carlos Cobian. Pieces such as "Mala Pinta" (Francisco and Julio De Caro; listen to track 48 on the CD), "Los Dopados" (Juan Carlos Cobian; listen to track 49 on the CD) or "Mala Junta" (Julio De Caro and Pedro Laurenz) exhibit increasing melodic ranges, large interval leaps, arpeggiation, use of 9ths and b9ths over dominant chords, sudden doublings in the harmonic rhythm, increasing chromaticism, and denser lines, among other novel traits.

While composers identified with the aesthetic of the old guard remained attached to the models of the previous decades, most tangos began to take on a markedly different shape. These transformations were evident in new works, but were also found in the arrangements of older tangos produced by the new generation of musicians. Despite these changes, many of the compositions

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[21] "El tango, en el cual los procedimientos de elaboración compleja están por lo general ausentes, se define como especie, como unidad superior de carácter, por sus motivos, cuya sola enunciación prefigura aquella y permite su individualización."

[22] "…se enfatiza la función primordial del motivo a la hora de establecer la identidad de una pieza musical como tango…"

[23] "En esta época, en tango presentaba una forma cerrada en secciones cortas, con escasas variaciones en su longitud y que no permitía, por lo tango, el desarrollo del material en el sentido de la tradición académica europea."

inspiring new, and at times, complex arrangements, were the result of those simple formulaic schemes that once identified the genre.

Harmony

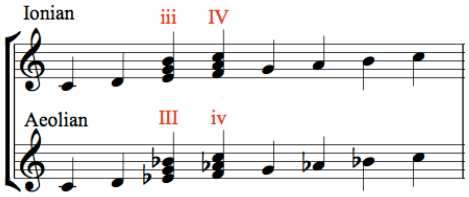
In the previous chapter, I presented Rodolfo Mederos' view of the general harmonic palette of tango. Mederos equates the harmonic language of the genre during the 1930s and 1940s to that of the Late Classic period/Early Romantic era. This correspondence was also underlined by Julian Peralta in his publication *La Orquesta Típica: Mecánica y aplicación de los fundamentos técnicos del tango* (2008). Peralta opens his chapter on harmony by noting that, "[t]he development of tango's backbone is based on the tonal harmony of the classic-romantic era" (Peralta 2008, 101).

Composer and bandoneonist Pablo Mainetti voiced an opinion very similar to Mederos' and Peralta's during a conversation we had in the summer of 2011. Over a few *mates*,[24] Mainetti described the harmonic reality of tango as "barely reaching the twentieth century" (Mainetti, conversation with the author, November 20th 2011).[25] Mainetti's comment suggests a wider harmonic palette than implied by Mederos and Peralta's remarks since he includes works that fall outside the period upon which his colleagues based their opinions.

The analysis of a few compositions and arrangements from around the 1940s supports the opinions of Mederos, Peralta, and Mainetti. They show an uncomplicated harmonic structure based on an unambiguous sense of tonality and strong tonal directionality. Within sections, secondary dominants and chromatic bridges are used to create momentary tonicizations of an area closely related to the main tonic of the piece. An increased sense of mobility in the bass/pianist's left hand—at the time, the bass remained paired to the pianist's left hand—added a number of chromaticisms that resulted in passing colourful dissonant embellishments but never compromised the general sense of tonality. We can also see the use of chords borrowed from other modes. These were often the iv or bIII in the major, taken from the Aeolian mode (Figure 5.3).

[24] Mate is a very popular infused beverage in Argentina (also popular in Uruguay, Paraguay, and the south of Brazil). Mate is particularly common in social gatherings. It is served in a calabash gourd containing yerba mate leaves. Hot water is poured over the leaves and the content is drunk through a metal straw.
[25] …en lo armónico, el tango esta arañando el siglo XX.

Figure 5.3 Example of modal borrowing (C Ionian and C Aeolian)



According to Julian Peralta, the use of a flattened third degree in the major comes from its use in local folkloric forms such as the *triunfo* and the *cifra* (Peralta 2008, 120). In contrast, Pablo Kohan turns to jazz in order to explain the pianist's use of the bIII in his analysis of the music of Juan Carlos Cobián. This "blue note," as Kohan calls it, is not the only element he sees coming from the Afro-American tradition. He also mentions chromatic appoggiaturas, dominant chords with a raised 5th, and cadential progressions with diminished chords and dominant cycles (Kohan 2010, 43). Although in different ways, both Argentine folklore and jazz played considerable roles in the processes shaping the development of tango.

In his *Curso de Tango*, composer Horacio Salgán devoted very little space to harmonic concerns. Most of the three-page section is devoted to a historical overview. Salgán notes that "harmonic effects" were not the priority in tango's early years; instead the focus was on "the beauty of the melody, the rhythm, and expressivity" (Salgán 2001, 52).[26] Salgán tells us that throughout the 1920s and 1930s or *epoca Decareana* (De Caro's era),[27] the interest in these effects began to be more evident. According to him, after the 1940s, there was a sort of "free reign" for the exploration of "chords of all kinds."[28] Since the late 1950s tango composers have continued exploring new and increasingly complex harmonic textures. We take as an example one of the earliest compositions of Astor Piazzolla, "Tres Minutos con la Realidad;" composed in 1957, the piece is roughly based on Alberto Ginastera's first piano sonata. A more recent example of the intricate harmonic structures tango composers are working with is the tango-translation Gustavo Beytelmann made of Modest Mussorgsky's 1874 Pictures at an Exhibition. Despite all these new harmonic possibilities, melody, rhythm, and, especially, expressivity remain the priorities in tango.

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[26] "Es evidente que no estaba en el animo de los músicos de la época la preocupación por los efectos armónicos y si, en cambio, por la belleza de la melodía, el ritmo y la expresividad."

[27] Given the importance of Julio De Caro's influence in the evolution of tango, the period spanning roughly from the 1920s to the mid-1930s is often called "*la epoca Decareana*" (De Caro's era).

[28] "A medida que nos acercamos a la época Decareana la importancia y atracción de los efectos armónicos va evidenciando cada vez mas su presencia en el Tango. Y ya desde la década del 40 en adelante hubo una especie de "vía libre" para la inspección de acordes de todo tipo."

While it is possible to present a general description of the harmonic language that has shaped much tango repertoire, it is not possible to pinpoint a particular harmonic event that listeners would directly associate with the genre. When dealing with other urban musics such as flamenco, rock, or jazz, it is not difficult to find signs that most western listeners would hear as "harmonic identifiers": flamenco has the unmistakable so-called Andalusian or Phrygian cadence; a diatonic succession of ascending "power chords" would be likely be associated with rock; and a iim7b5-V7b9-im7 progression around the cycle of fifths would likely be heard as "jazzy," regardless of how it is performed. No such harmonic event exists in tango.

Melody

Melody is one of the most important aspects in tango. Beyond being the element that identifies the composition, the melody plays a key role in structuring the work and its development. According to Cepitelli, "the themes are the conducting thread of the musical development, the unifying element of the entire composition and therefore the arrangement" (Cepitelli 2006, 64).[29] This point is also emphasized by Horacio Salgán in his *Curso de Tango*: "tango, requires that the theme or reminiscences thereof, be as present as possible; only a particularly pleasant passage, always within the character of the style and song, would justify its absence" (Salgán 2001, 33).[30] As Cepitelli concludes, "[f]ar from being reducible to a simple melody, the theme is the mainstay of this music." In fact, one of the main objectives of the French musicologist's work was to shed some light over the important role the theme and its constitutive materials play in the internal development of a tango piece" (Cepitelli 2006, 92).[31]

The distinct ways in which improvisatory practices have developed in tango are a clear indication of the importance given to the melody. Improvisation played an essential role in many stages of tango's evolution. While the influence of other nineteenth century dance-musics (e.g.,

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[29] "…les thèmes sont le fil conducteur du déroulement musical, l'élément unificateur de toute la composition et par conséquent de l'arrangement…"
[30] "El tango requiere que el tema o reminiscencias del mismo, estén lo mas presente posible y solo el hallazgo de un pasaje muy feliz, siempre dentro del carácter y el estilo del tema, justificar la ausencia de este."
[31] "Cette réflexion préliminaire permet ainsi de considérer avec importance la thématique dans la musique tango. Loin d'être réductible à une simple mélodie, le thème constitue le pilier essentiel de cette musique. Ce qu'il faut retenir de cette brève analyse thématique, c'est donc moins une typologie thématique qui distingue entre différentes manières d'organiser le matériau et la progression du thème, que l'importance de l'élaboration interne du thème et de ses matériaux."

polkas, habaneras, marches, rags, etc.) can be easily identified in the formal characteristics of early tango, it is impossible to ascertain the particular role that each of these and other local musical traditions (e.g., *payadas*, *milongas*, and *candombes*) found cohabiting in Buenos Aires at the end of the nineteenth century played in determining its initial shape.[32] Nonetheless, it is possible to imagine the role that improvisational practices would have had in channelling their interaction. During the process of consolidating the performance practices that began to shape early tango, improvisation also played a central role. Makeshift ensembles would be formed for a particular event and the participating musicians would improvise, each following, either by memory or with the aid of a lead sheet, the melody and chord progression of the chosen piece. This practice was called playing *a la parrilla* (on the grill), in reference to the stand where the lead sheets would have been placed. As previously noted, the early tangos used as the vehicle for these improvised performances were fairly uncomplicated from a compositional perspective. This simplicity facilitated improvisation. Playing *a la parrilla* is still in vogue today, especially in evening parties where musicians gather to accompany a milonga (Pelinski 2000b, 27).[33]

It is due in part to the subsequent enlargements of the tango orchestras and the increasing complexity of their arrangements (1920s-1940s) that improvisation progressively fell out of favour. Later, in the smaller ensembles characteristic of the 1960s and early 1970s, improvisation regained prominence and grew more audacious, although, significantly, the composition's main melody was always kept in earshot. Jazz was an important influence for many tango musicians and some doubled as jazz performers. By and large, however, the influence of jazz remained circumscribed to the realm of harmony; what jazz players refer to as "playing the changes" did not make it into the tango tradition.[34] This is not to say that tango musicians have not incorporated freer improvisatory approaches into their music. They certainly have, but these are idiosyncratic to their own personal styles, not a trend within the genre.

In tango, melodies are generally categorized as either expressive or rhythmic. This division is mentioned in almost all the publications dealing with the technical and performative aspects of

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[32] I would like to thank Robert Witmer for bringing to my attention the formal similarities that existed between early tango and other so-called "light music" types.

[33] "En efecto, la tradición de tocar a la parilla (es decir, con una distribución instrumental improvisada, sin partes escritas para cada instrumento) todavía esta viva hoy, sobre todo en las veladas donde los músicos se reúnen ocasionalmente para acompañar una *milonga* (el baile del tango en determinados sitios del barrio)."

[34] 'Playing the changes' is the act of improvising over the harmonic structure (chord changes) of a given composition ('the changes'). It is not uncommon for jazz players to quote parts of the main melody of the tune, but, generally, the chosen piece acts as a vehicle for improvisation.

tango (Cepitelli 2006; Fain 2010; Gallo 2011; Marsili 2012; Peralta 2008; Salgán 2001). Although, this categorization is far from being "systematic or rigorous" (Cepitelli 2006, 93), the rhythmic/expressive contrast of melodies plays a central role in structuring traditional tango compositions.[35] Generally speaking, each of the two, three or more (rare) sections of a tango is defined by a melody of expressive or rhythmic qualities. Cepitelli notes that, "the first part (or theme) is usually rhythmic while the second is melodic" (2006, 93). According to Salgán,

> …when dealing with a melodic tango, it is obvious that the melody and the accompaniment must be interpreted mostly *legato*: it is characteristic of tango to alternate legato phrases with staccato ones. This possibility, valid within the realm of melodic tango, avoids monotony, while the *staccato* in the melody, with its corresponding accompaniment, is an expressive approach characteristic of tango that, along with its accents, its rhythmic nature, and phrasing confirm and define the genre. (Salgán 2001, 34)[36]

In contrast,

> …a rhythmic theme contains in its theme and corresponding accompaniment elements that define it as such. Of great importance are the accents and inflections that help to give it its peculiar character; *staccato* passages have special preponderance. These alternate in turn with *legato* passages linked, as in the melodic Tango. (Salgán 2001, 34)[37]

As noted by Cepitelli, the difficulty lies in identifying the types of material that constitute a particular section (Cepitelli 2006, 95).[38] In addition, not all melodies fit comfortably on one or the other side of the rhythmic/melodic spectrum. Hence, it is up to the performer to bring out the

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[35] As noted by Paulina Fain, it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that most of the material that over the years has been edited has been printed for piano. In these editions, the melodic line is commonly presented without any interpretative indications. Similarly, the accompaniment, as something that often follows the expressive or rhythmic nature of the melody, is presented as a simplified referential harmony. Using these editions as points of reference makes performance quite difficult since one of the most important parts of the equation, the arrangement, is missing (Fain 2010, 14).

[36] "Tratándose de un Tango Melódico, es obvio que una ejecución ligada de la Melodía y del Acompañamiento han de ser utilizados de manera preponderante : pero es característico del género el alternar la ejecución de frases ligadas con otras staccato. Esta posibilidad, legitima dentro del estilo del Tango melódico, evita la monotonía, al tiempo que el staccato en la Melodía, con su correspondiente acompañamiento, es una forma de expresión propia del Tango y es una de la características fundamentales que, junto a los acentos, a su rítmica y a su fraseo confirman y definen al Género."

[37] "El tango rítmico…contiene en su temática y correlativo acompañamiento elementos que lo definen como tal. Asumen gran importancia los acentos e inflexiones que coadyuvan a darle su peculiar carácter y tienen especial preponderancia los pasajes "staccato", los que alternan a su vez con los pasajes ligados, tal como ocurre en el Tango melódico."

[38] "La difficulté réside ainsi dans l'authentification des types de matériaux."

chosen character through the appropriate articulation. Marsili (2012, 109) enumerates some of the important differences between expressive and rhythmic themes:

- Articulations
- Phrases
- Rhythmic themes have very dynamic characteristics
- The actual notes of the rhythmic themes coincide less with the meter than those of the melodic themes.

To this list Cepitelli (2006, 96/97) adds:

- A melody where the upper line (the vocal line, if you will) is doubled, that is supplemented by one or more line(s), could be considered melodic.
- Most rhythmic material is marked by repetitiveness. The rhythmic materials usually correspond to short patterns, sometimes even cells are immediately repeated.

This short description of some of the main traits of the melodies that shape the corpus of traditional tango places the accent on one particular aspect that I consider the most important in any attempt to understand what constitutes tango from the point of view of a performer or a listener, namely, phrasing and articulation. Melodies can be classified in numerous ways and according to multiple categories. It is ultimately how these melodies are interpreted that places them in the realm of tango.

When the Mexican singer Aida Cuevas performed "Por una cabeza" (listen to track 50 on the CD), a tango composed by Carlos Gardel and Alfredo Le Pera, the composition was no longer a tango in the traditional sense. Cuevas does not deviate from the original melody, but the arrangement and interpretation turned the work into a fast bolero peppered with mariachi colours. The same could be said about the version Argentine jazz pianist Adrian Iaies recorded of the tango "Sur" (listen to track 51 on the CD), one of the most popular works of Aníbal Troilo (music) and Homero Manzi (lyrics). Iaies' rendition is based on a complex reharmonization of the theme. Although anyone familiar with the original tango would easily recognize the melody, the work is no longer a tango. It is through the knowledge tango musicians have accumulated over years of attentive listening and involved practice that allows those simple melodies to become part of what we know as tango.

Meter and Rhythm

If this analysis were limited to the first decade of the twentieth century, it would be conceivable to suggest the existence of a rhythmic pattern characteristic of tango based on the motif commonly associated with the habanera. As I have suggested above, however, it would not be the motive per se that would identify the genre, but how it was interpreted based on its assimilation in the popular traditions of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Given that this examination extends beyond the first decade of the 20th century, the habanera pattern, that "rhythmic Esperanto" as Farris Thompson lucidly called it (Thompson 2005, 112), cannot be taken as representative.[39]

Starting in the 1910s, the model of accompaniment in tango gradually ceased to be determined solely by the use of the habanera pattern. Instead, we begin to see the implementation of an accompaniment that over time will receive the label *marcato*. There are numerous ways of approaching the marcato, but, in a nutshell, the term refers to the "marking" of the four pulses within the measure (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4 Marcato variants[40]

Figure 5.3.a Marcato in four

Figure 5.3.b Marcato in one and three

Figure 5.3.c Marcato in two

Figure 5.3.d Pesante in two

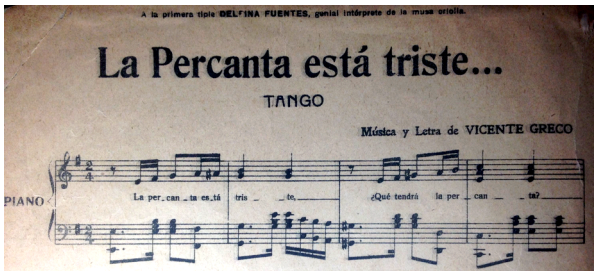
Figure 5.3.e Pesante in four

[39] I have come to notice that melodies based on a 3-3-2 subdivision of the 4/4 bar are often considered characteristic of tango. This impression is not altogether incorrect; it is, however, based on a very selective listening of tango that centres on the music of Astor Piazzolla. The 3-3-2 scheme was initially adopted in the mid-1920s by composers such as Julio De Caro and Francisco Canaro, the origins of which can be traced back to the 3-1-2-2 scheme of the habanera and the subsequent 3-2-2 reinterpretations that later shaped the fast and slow Argentine milongas. Although frequent in the traditional repertoire since the 1920s, the use of the 3-3-2 subdivision is not as common as to be considered characteristic of the genre; it is the recurrent use Piazzolla made of it that explains this perception. Piazzolla generalized the usage of various mutations of the 3-3-2 pattern to the point of making them his own personal stylistic trait. As Gabriela Mauriño points out, "Piazzolla took his rhythmic treatment from the orchestras of Julio De Caro and later Alfredo Gobbi, among others, systematizing its usage until turning it into a trait distinctive of his style" (Piazzolla lo tomó de las orquestras de Julio De Caro y más tarde Alfredo Gobbi, entre otras, y sistematizó su uso de tal forma que lo convirtió en un rasgo distintivo de si estilo) (Mauriño 2008, 242).

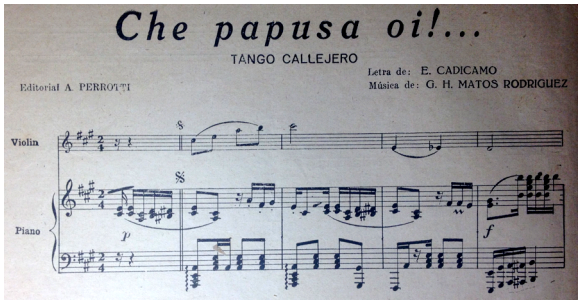
[40] The graphic representation is based on Andrea Marsili's (Marsili 2012).

The increasing use of the marcato brought with it a change in the overall metric perception of tango such that the initial 2/4 started to feel more and more like 4/8 (Figure 5.5.b and Figure 5.5.c.) Over time, the 4/8 was replaced by a 4/4 metric scheme best suited to illustrate the changes in tempo and rhythmic subdivision that were taking place within the genre at the time.[41] While some composers continued to writein 4/8,[42] most printed tangos were presented in 4/4. The 2/4 scheme continued to be used for milongas since the style is based on the use of a rhythmic accompaniment pattern similar to that of the habanera.

Figure 5.5 - Early tango piano original lead sheets — 2/4 - 4/8 to 4/4 transition



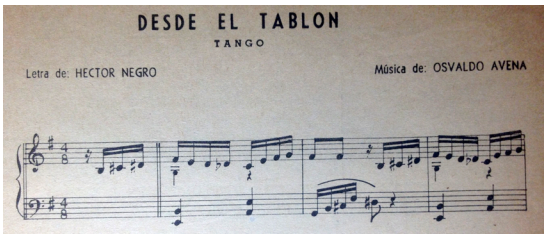
5.5.a Tango in 2/4 with the habanera pattern in the accompaniment (original piano lead sheet)



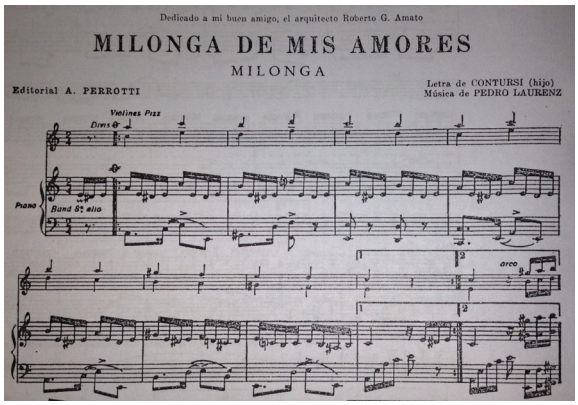
5.5.b Tango in 2/4 with marcato in four - reminiscences of the habanera pattern in the accompaniment (original piano lead sheet)

[41] Some musicians consider the incorporation of the bandoneon as the event that promoted the metric restructuring from 2/4 to 4/8 (later 4/4). In his *El bandoneon desde el tango*, Arturo Penón suggests that "[W]ith the arrival of the bandoneon, the rhythmic speed of tango was subdivided, first in practice, without having alterations in the scores. Then, composers began to replace the 2/4 for 4/8" (Penón 1986, 28-29). [Asi, con la llegada del bandoneon, la velocidad rítmica del tango se subdividió, primero en forma practica, sin que fueran modificadas las partituras. Luego, los compositores sustituirán el dos por cuatro por un cuatro por ocho.]

[42] In 2008 a series of Horacio Salgán original manuscripts were compiled and published under the title *Arreglos para orquesta típica: tradición e innovación en manuscritos originales*. With the exception of *Motivo de Vals*, a waltz in 3/4, all the pieces are written in 4/8.



5.5.c Tango in 4/8 with marcato in two (original piano lead sheet)



5.5.d Tango milonga in 2/4 – habanera-like pattern in the accompaniment (original piano lead sheet)

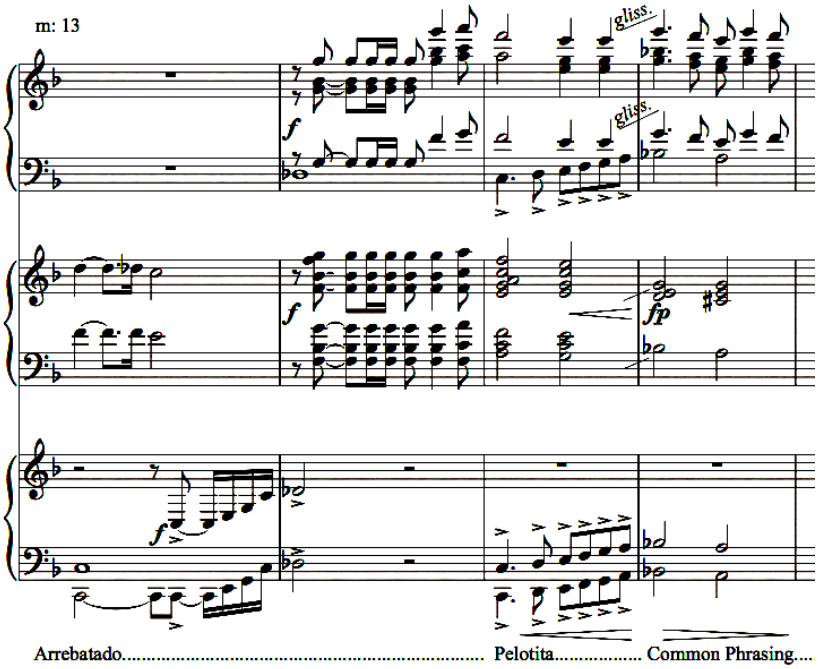
According to Andrea Marsili, all rhythmic schemes of accompaniment in tango "were designed to either enhance or to 'escape' the binary nature of this music" (Marsili 2012, 47).[43] The graphic representation of the marcatos clearly shows that the intention behind this mode of accompaniment is to unambiguously accentuate tango's "binariness." One of the particularities of this genre, however, is its marked tendency to defy time regularities, even in instances where the music clearly delineates the intrinsic binary nature of the genre.

In December of 2012, I had the opportunity to attend a master class on orchestral playing that violinist and composer Ramiro Gallo had organized at a school in Buenos Aires. The class was designed to explore some of the particularities of ensemble playing within the context of an orquesta típica. One of the compositions Gallo brought for the ensemble was Osvaldo Pugliese's arrangement of "La Mariposa," a tango by Pedro Maffia and Celedonio Flores (listen to Track 52 on the CD). While addressing some of the nuances in the articulation of a particular section (mm. 13-18), Gallo explained to the ensemble that, "each measure has a different phrasing. The first measures [mm. 13 and 14] have a phrasing approach that within Pugliese's orchestra was known as *arrebatado*

[43] "Tous les modèles rythmiques d'accompagnements qui ont été formulées cherchent soit à accentuer ou à évader" l'aspect binaire de cette musique."

(hasty). In the following measure [mm. 15] we are going to use what we call *pelotita* (little ball)…. and in the next one, a basic phrasing within the tempo" (Figure 5.6).[44]

Figure 5.6 Reduction of Osvaldo Pugliese's arrangement of "La Mariposa" (mm. 13 to 16)[45]



What Pugliese's musicians called *arrebatado* is a way of phrasing in which the tempo is pushed forward and part of the measure is played at a different tempo. Ramiro Gallo referred to this as, "you brush off the tempo."

The next phrasing style Gallo mentioned was the so-called *la pelotita*. In order to understand this concept, one simply needs to imagine a little ball that is dropped and begins to bounce freely against the floor. Over a short span of time, the bounces of the ball will become increasingly faster given the gradual loss of kinetic energy. If we equate each progressively shorter bounce of the ball to the note of a phrase we end up with a line that would move increasingly faster until its arrival on the downbeat of the following measure (Figure 5.7).

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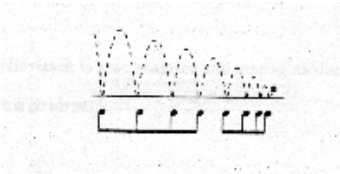
[44] "Cada compás tiene una forma de fraseo diferente. El primer compás tiene una forma de fraseo que dentro de la orquesta de Pugliese le llamaban arrebatado. En el siguiente compás vamos a usa lo que se llama pelotita… y en el próximo, un fraseo básico dentro del tempo."

[45] Unless indicated, all musical transcriptions are the author's.

Figure 5.7 Julian Peralta's graphic representation of "*la pelotita*" (Peralta 2008)



The particular accelerando effect behind *la pelotita*, Gallo later explained, runs through almost all the phrasings in tango. It can be thought of as the idea at the centre of all the various ways to phrase in the genre.

After *la pelotita*, in measure 15, the members of the Gallo's master class ensemble were instructed to use a *fraseo común* (common phrasing) within the tempo of the piece.[46] It took the ensemble around half an hour of practice to begin moving through measures 13, 14 and 15 in reasonable synchrony. This experience speaks volumes about the levels of individual musicianship required to play in a professional orquesta típica. Music psychologist Luke Windsor (writing of western art music) describes the process required to achieve such synchrony:

> …the remarkable ability of musicians to minimize asynchrony…is not primarily to do with skill in synchronization per se. Rather, it is to do with musicians sharing a similar mental representation of the structure of the music that they are playing. Such a shared representation, tied as it is to the motor programme which organizes their action, allows for mutual prediction of when and to what extent tempo should be modified. (Windsor 2004, 65)

Windsor's idea of a shared music representation offers an interesting way to approach the study of the mechanism that allows orchestras such as those of Aníbal Troilo or Osvaldo Pugliese, or smaller ensembles such as *El Sexteto Tango*, *El Quinteto Real* or *El Sexteto Mayo*r, to contour their communally produced sound around the temporal flexibilities they themselves create.

My experience at Ramiro Gallo's master class offers an initial insight into the intricacies that characterize tango musicians' relationship to tempo and rhythm. Recordings show that throughout

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[46] The indication of a *fraseo común* (common phrasing) did not require further explanation as everyone in the ensemble seemed comfortable with the expressive implications of the term. Terms such as *fraseo*, *fraseado* or *frasear* appear in numerous tango scores and transcriptions. In a nutshell, the term *fraseo* is used to call for a very expressive interpretation of a melodic passage. In her work *La Flauta en el tango* (The Flute in Tango), Paulina Fain describes the *fraseo básico* as one that "alters the melody within the scope of the 1st and 2nd, or 3rd and 4th, beats of the bar, i.e., respecting the melody's arrival at the downbeat of the bar (1st and 3rd) together with the harmony…" (English translation as published in the original work; Fain 2010, 17).

the decades that followed tango's initial consolidation, tango musicians developed increasingly flexible approaches when it came to tempi and the rhythmic structures they shaped. As expected, bandleaders whose music was specifically intended for the dance floor were much more cautious in their handling of these musical considerations. This, however, does not mean that the music for dancers did not change significantly in tempo and rhythmic flexibility. While orchestra leaders such as Juan D' Arienzo and Rodolfo Biagi maintained stylistic approaches based on a relentless pulsation and briskly articulated rhythms, others began to explore increasingly loose textures (e.g., Aníbal Troilo, Alfredo Gobbi, and Osvaldo Pugliese). Not surprisingly, however, it was outside the context of dance venues that musicians began to engage fully in the exploration of the expressive implications of this increasing flexibility in the conceptualization of time and rhythm.

One of these musicians was the violinist Elvino Vardaro, leader of one of the legendary ensembles of the 1930s.[47] Vardaro's own ensemble left no recording, but Azzi notes that "his violin playing is still remembered as legendary for its perfect phrasing, its extraordinary expressiveness, and its distinctive rubato touches" (2002, 53; listen to track 53 on the CD).[48] Referring to the sound of Vardaro's sextet, historian Luis Sierra used a term that, while not without its problems, offers a good initial illustration of tango musicians' treatment of tempo. He described the rhythmic articulation of the sextet as one of "open cadence" (Sierra 1966, 78).[49] Sierra was pointing to the contrasting tempos and improvisatory approach the characterized cadenzas in the Classical period. While the Classical cadenza carries structural implications that are totally foreign to tango, the idea of an undisrupted musical discourse, where interpreters weave their expressive needs over a malleable but never unclear pulse conjointly created, is a helpful one.

Temporal discrepancies are especially important when dealing with tango. I'm not suggesting a liquidated sense of pulse or the lack of an isochronous tempo; but, given the expressions that are likely to have marked most listeners' first experiences with tango, it is important to emphasize this flexibility.[50] Besides, as mentioned in the discussion of melody above, two highly contrasting sections

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[47] According to Astor Piazzolla, Vardaro's sextet was a revelation that changed his relationship with tango (Piazzolla 1987, 31).

[48] "…todavía se recuerda el violín legendario de Vardaro, por su fraseo perfecto, su extraordinaria expresividad y su singular rubato."

[49] Sierra's actual words were "*una marcación rítmica de libre cadencia*." The phrase defies direct translation.

[50] Tangos play central roles in sections of various known films: *Some Like it Hot* (1959), *Scent of a Woman* (1992), *Moulin Rouge* (2001), and *Chicago* (2002) among many others. None of these tangos were arranged or performed following the stylistic models of traditional or contemporary expressions. Something similar can be said about the recordings that have won the tango category at the Grammy Awards since 2010: Aida Cuevas, *De Corazón a Corazón: Tango Mariachi* (2010);

structure most tangos. This means that a highly rhythmic section supported by four quarter-notes to the bar in the bass and possibly also in the piano, can be followed by another section in which the prevailing tempo is suddenly halved and no longer pulsed. The opening bars of the second section of Pugliese's "*La Mariposa*" are a perfect example of the complex shift in tempo that take place in the interpretation of tango (listen to track 52 on the CD - the second section starts at 00:44).

This rhythmic flexibility, however, is never constant. It is, in fact, a variable that defines the various relationships that exist within a tango ensemble in different ways and at different times. Each member of the ensemble maintains an individual relationship with the tempo that is shaped by the interaction of the ensemble collectively. The lack of a set of percussive instruments that take the role of rhythmic anchor lead to the development of highly percussive approaches among all tango instrumentalists. In this situation, the responsibility of establishing the "groove" of the group does not fall in the hands of the members of the rhythm section. Instead, the "groove" in tango is the outcome of what Jorge Novati and Ines Cuello call *ritmo total* (total rhythm); it results from the interaction of all the elements involved (i.e., melody, harmony, and rhythm) (Novati and Cuello 1980, 53). In the hands of tango musicians, this *ritmo total* is constantly reinterpreted over time in a fluid and uninterrupted fashion over the various changes of tempi and mood characteristic of a tango composition.

Phrasing/Articulation

Tango has an ambivalent character. According to Pelinski, although "it is composed music, written music…its nature demands the sonic realization of idiomatic traits in its interpretation" (2008, 37-38).[51] The unique approach to phrasing and articulation shapes the nature of tango. During my conversation with bassist Patrice Caratini, he acknowledged that he had never played tango before joining the BCM trio but, in his own words, "it was not that hard."[52] According to Caratini, however, there were two aspects that were new to him. The first issue was the particular way in which the bow is used in tango. "I knew how it worked," Caratini noted, "but there was a

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Diego El Cigala, *Cigala & Tango* (2011); Arturo Sandoval, *Tango Como Yo Te Siento* (2012); Diego El Cigala, *Romance de Luna Tucumana* (2013).

[51] "El carácter ambivalente del tango como música compuesta (escrita) pero cuya naturaleza exige la concreción sonora de rasgos idiomáticos en la interpretación."

[52] "Ce n'était pas très difficile."

particular character to be found."[53] The second issue was the way in which the music "breathes…*it breathes in relation to the phrase, not the pulse*" (emphasis is mine; Caratini, conversation with the author, December 01, 2010).[54] Not only the music "breathes" in relation to the phrase; the whole music event is shaped around the phrase. As Gerardo Jerez Le Cam noted, "there is something very concrete, you come up with a theme, a melody, a phrase… and the phrase itself determines its context" (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[55]

While it is certainly through the combination of numerous elements that a given tango comes alive, the idiosyncratic sense of phrasing and articulation in the genre emerges as central. A British trumpet player once said to jazz bassist Steve Swallow, "It's in the sounds, mate, not the notes" (Feld and Keil 1994, 11). As in jazz, the notes do matter in tango, but it is how those notes comes out of each of the musicians' instruments and the subsequent interaction of the sounds within the ensemble that defines the *tangoness* we hear when listening to a given piece.

The first step into this examination of articulation and phrasing in tango takes us to Gustavo Beytelmann. According to this composer,

> Tango chose what for me is its initial image and this is its thetic suspensive rhythm, in other words, the particular relationship that exists between strong and weak beats. From that, over time, you see the definition of stylistic particularities and rhythmic variations, which came as a result of a level of technical excellence that developed after the foundational era. (quoted in Salton 2006, 13)[56]

The most characteristic example of this thetic suspensive rhythm is the pattern popularly known among tango musicians as the "*uhmpa*" rhythm (Figure 5.8).[57]

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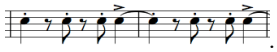
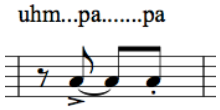
[53] "Je savais comment sa fonctionné… mais il y avait un caractère à trouver."
[54] "La musique respire en fonction de la phrase, pas en fonction de la pulsation. "
[55] "Hay algo muy concreto, a vos se te ocurre un tema, una melodía, una frase…y la frase misma determina su contexto."
[56] "No sé por qué pero el tango eligió lo que es para mí su imagen inicial y es su ritmo tético suspensivo, que traducido al criollo sería la particular relación que hay entre los tiempos fuertes y los tiempos débiles. A partir de eso se definen después las particularidades de estilo y las variaciones rítmicas, que llegaron como consecuencia de una excelencia técnica posterior a la época fundacional."
[57] In his *El Violín en el Tango*, Ramiro Gallo uses the term "*umpa*" in reference to what he labels one of the ""lightest"" models of accompaniment in tango (Gallo 2011, 95). The following graph shows the accentual design of Gallo's model:  . Beyond the different interpretation of the term "*umpa*," the design of Gallo's model highlights the closeness existing between the design of accompaniment schemes and the accentual idiosyncrasies of melodies in tango.

Figure 5.8 The "*uhmpa*" cell



Although Beytelmann has never fully explained the reasoning behind the thetic suspensive label, the adjective suspensive seems to point to the tension created by the evasion of the accent on the first eight-note (thetic) and its articulation on the second one. Interestingly, in tango, the silent beginning of the pattern is often felt as accented. While the idea of an accented rest or silence may seem off-putting for some, most musicians are quite comfortable with the concept.[58] In tango, every rest within the phrase is perceived as accented.

The relevance of Beytelmann's thetic suspensive concept in tango's melodic articulation is clearly underlined in one of the exercises flutist Paulina Fain included in her method book *La flauta en el tango*. Fain's *Estudio 2* is helpful in illustrating some of numerous possibilities of this particular accentual pattern (Figure 5.9; listen to track 54 on the CD). Due to its placement and articulation, the melody creates a constantly changing tension/relaxation dynamic against what Beytelmann called the metric stereotype of the 4/4 measure. As Cepitelli explains,

> …tango's rhythmic gesture consists of a game of reaction against and assertion of that stereotype. In this context then appear convergent rhythmic events and divergent rhythmic events. As defined by Beytelmann: a rhythmic event that coincides with the metric accents and time subdivisions is convergent; a rhythmic event that goes against this stereotype, upsetting its predictability through anticipations and delays, is divergent.[59] (Cepitelli 2006, 46)

In my view, originality in tango is not so much a result of the exploration of the convergent/divergent relationships underlined by Beytelmann, but a consequence of the methods musicians developed to articulate those relationships (Cepitelli 2011).[60] Once again, let me repeat

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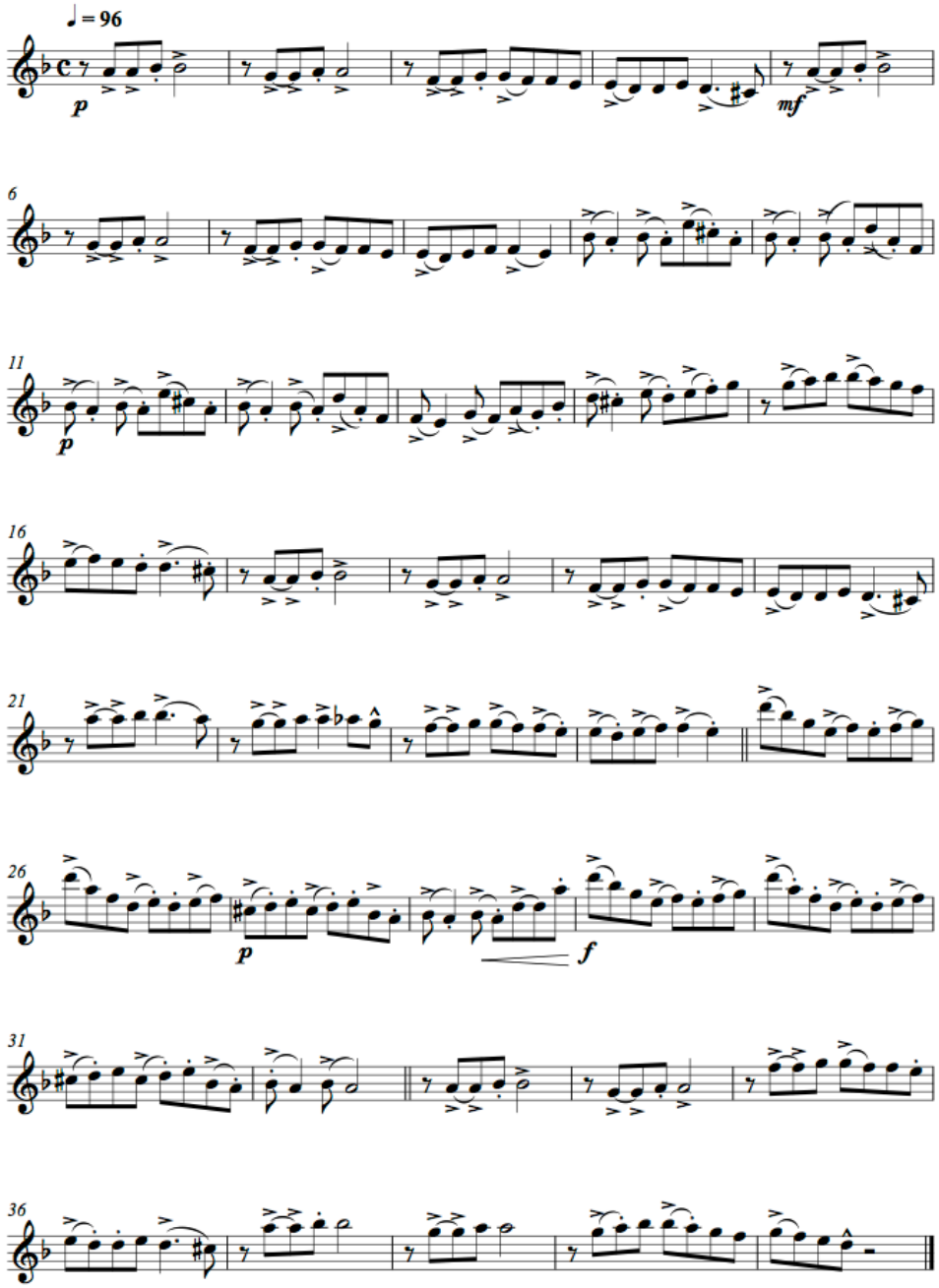
[58] As music pedagogue Casey Sokol used to say during his musicianship classes at York University, silence is not the absence of something but the presence of nothing.

[59] "Le geste rythmique *tanguero* consisterait en effet en un jeu de torsion et d'affirmation de ce stéréotype. Dans ce contexte apparaissent alors des comportements rythmiques convergents et des comportements rythmiques divergents. Précisons ici la terminologie utilisée par Beytelmann: est convergent un comportement rythmique coïncidant avec les accents métriques et les subdivisions du temps; est divergent un comportement rythmique se dégageant de ce stéréotype, déjouant sa prévisibilité par des anticipations et des retards."

[60] "…l'originalité du tango est moins à chercher dans le fait d'explorer « la relation particulière entre temps forts et temps faibles » - pour reprendre ici la formule de Beytelmann – que dans les moyens qu'il a développés pour y parvenir."

that my intention in making such analytical observations is to place the emphasis on the knowledge tango musicians carry, and the experience that allows them to shape a series of notes or chords into a melody, accompaniment, or progression that their colleagues and audiences would recognize as being part of a shared tradition.

Figure 5.9 Paulina Fain's *Estudio 2 Articulación Combinada* (Study 2 – Combined articulation)



Chapter 6
Tango Nómadeand a 'Bakhtinian approach' to its analysis

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the tango musicians I interviewed for this dissertation draw on an aesthetic of a "controlled estrangement" to both distance themselves from and maintain a relationship with the models that historically shaped tango. My aim in this chapter is to better understand the balancing act implied in this aesthetic and the musical processes that have allowed these artists to navigate the historical boundaries of tango so they can accommodate their own musical and expressive needs. In the process, my aim is to identify the particularities that permit a music genre such as tango to incorporate the wide array of non-tango influences and elements it does and still be heard as such. In order to do this, I examine a number of works from various composers currently living in Paris. The pieces forming the core of this chapter are the BCM trio's rereading of the tango classic "*La Cumparista*" (listen to track 56 on the CD) and Tomas Gubitsch's "*Te acordas de mi*?" (listen to track 57 on the CD) and "*De los hermanos*" (listen to track 58 on the CD).

Although close attention to the notation of the musical text is fundamental for the analysis of these written compositions, my ultimate objective requires an analytical approach capable of reaching beyond the formalist nature of western musical analysis. This is because perceiving these as tangos is not to be found in the melodies, the harmonies, or the rhythmic patterns used, but in the ways these compositions have been "musicalized" by the musicians in performance.

The set of acquired patterns of thought, behaviour, and taste grouped under Pelinski's "habitus" and how musicians consciously manipulate them are the main focus of this analysis. In order to examine the ways in which musicians "speak" when playing together and the ways in which their personal "accents" ultimately convey what they have to say and the manner in which they think it needs to be said, I have borrowed some of the ideas that Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin developed during his study of the language of the eighteenth-century novel. My reading of Bakhtin's ideas is in many respects incomplete (insofar as I only scratch the surface of his work and take considerable liberties in my interpretation of his concepts.) I believe that this invocation of Bakhtin offers suggestive and fruitful ways to look at the complex dialogues taking place in the musics I am concerned with.

Tango Nómadeand a "Bakhtinian approach" to music analysis

Previous to the 1981 publication of *The Dialogic Imagination*, the first English translation of Bakhtin's work, little was known about his ideas in English-speaking intellectual circles. The theories he developed throughout his study of the language of the novel, a genre he defined as a consciously structured hybrid of languages, have offered music scholars new and valuable theoretical lenses through which to examine the webs of interactions giving shape and signification to some contemporary music discourses (Fast 1996; Korsyn 1999; Lipsitz 1990; Monson 1996; Middleton 1995; Stayer 1995; Weiss 2008). Scholars have shown particular interest in Bakhtin's ideas of carnival, hybridity and double-voicedness, dialogism, heteroglossia, and the centripetal/centrifugal forces of language.

Bakhtin regarded the linguistic style of the eighteenth-century novel as radically different from previous literary styles. Indeed, he was of the opinion that "[A]ll the categories and methods of traditional stylistics remained incapable of dealing effectively with the artistic uniqueness of its discourse" (Bakhtin 1981, 261). Consequently, he called for a fundamentally different method of understanding and interpreting both novelistic style and the very nature and structure of language.

Bakhtin saw the novel as a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. He observed that, "the investigator" of the phenomenon "is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls" (ibid.), an internal stratification of language in the novel such that language was divided into competing styles representing different social groups, generations, and professions, as well as literary and non-literary genres. For Bakhtin, it is the never-resolved tensions resulting from these dialogues located at a particular time and place that shape the novel's characteristic style (ibid., 263).

This initial understanding of Bakhtin's ideas sums up quite nicely why music scholars have found them attractive and why I have considered applying them to the examination of the "novel tangos," to use a conceptually instructive play on words, that are my focus. As in Bakhtin's conception of the language of the novel, in the music of composers such as Beytelmann, Gubitsch, Le Cam, and Marsili, we find numerous styles representing a variety of social groups. Invoking Bakhtin's model, we can posit that our reaction to these composers' works is shaped at least in part by the tensions we perceive in the arrangements among their various components. Furthermore, as in Bakhtin's concept, we can note that these tensions and our perceptions of them can never be

fixed. As Bakhtin noted, our understanding of the novel, because it "begins from our experience of language in social life" (Korsyn 1999, 57), is likely to change according to the time and place in which we experience it. Similarly, our understanding of the novel tangos featured in this dissertation is likely to change according to the time and place of our experience of them.

As suggested in the previous chapter, the *tangoness* of a given work cannot be assigned to one specific musical/sonic event. Carlos Kuri addressed the situation with a comment on Piazzolla. However, his description is more suited to tango as a whole than to that (or any other) particular artist. The claim, "This is Piazzolla!," Kuri wrote,

> …involves the strictness of a differential trait, together with the vague feeling of not knowing in which technical element to locate it. Neither palpable reference to the compositional work, or its rhythmic peculiarity, or to that half-technical, half-corporeal concept called swing, nor to its timbre and even less to those efforts to seize, metaphysically, what is supposedly most elusive, invoking *the essence*, none of them embodies the trait that produces the identity of music. (Kuri 2008, 70)[1]

While I agree with Kuri's description (when applied to the genre not an individual artist), acknowledging that the identity of a tradition like tango does not rest in one given trait or practice should not discourage examinations aimed to further our understanding of why we hear a given piece as tango. Thus, I continue my Bakhtinian approach to an examination of tangoness. In the following three sections, I draw upon three of his ideas: heteroglossia, double-voicedness, and the centripetal/centrifugal forces of language.

Heteroglossia

Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia refers to conflicting discourses within a given language. This conflict is created by the interaction of the many voices that shape languages, such as "social dialects, characteristic group behavior [sic], professional jargons, generic languages, languages of

[1] "…supone la severidad de un rasgo diferencial, junto a la sensación difusa de no saber en que elemento técnico localizarlo. Ni la referencia palpable al trabajo compositivo, ni a la particularidad rítmica, ni a ese punto mitad técnico, mitad corporal denominado (a partir del contexto del jazz) swing, como tampoco a lo tímbrico y menos aun a aquellos esfuerzos para aprehender, metafísicamente, lo supuestamente mas huidizo, invocando la esencia, ninguno de ellos encarna el rasgo que produce la identidad de una música."

generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions" (Bakhtin 1981: 262). According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia is

> the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which ensures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup and therefore impossible to resolve. (Bakhtin 1981, 428)

This is the framework in which the dialogues between the language and speech types that Bakhtin understands as defining the eighteenth-century novel take place. As he explains, "the narrator's story or the story of the posited author is structured against the background of normal literary language, the expected literary horizon. Every moment of the story has a conscious relationship with this normal language and its belief system, is in fact set against them, and set against them *dialogically*" (emphasis in original; ibid., 314).

The dialogic tension between these two languages (i.e., the narrator's language and normal literary language) and their inherent belief systems is what Bakhtin determined permits authorial intention to be realized. Although Bakhtin does not explicitly discard the involvement of more elements, his dialogic tension is described as occurring between two contrasting languages, types of speeches. While the tango music discourses I am concerned with include the intervention of numerous distinct traditions and are thus not limited to the dual contrast Bakhtin speaks of, the fundamental dynamic illustrated by Bakhtin can be brought to bear on them as a useful means of analysis.

Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia is particularly appealing due to the relationship he establishes among the various levels of context, the agents, and the language types involved in the novel. Within the context of the tango analysis I am undertaking, I see it as especially applicable to the process of the transformation of written music into sound.

During her examination of some of the language metaphors commonly used in reference to music, Ingrid Monson presents an analogy that is similar to the way Bakhtin sees text. She writes,

> …if a novel portrays multiple characters and points of view all refracted through a single author's pen, a musical score presents multiple musical lines, instruments, counterpoints, textures, and harmonies coordinated by the composer.

> Performance of these musical texts—transformation of the notation into sound—includes multiple participants, but in Western classical music performers are generally not allowed to alter or (in some repertoires) even embellish this musical notation. (Monson 1996, 81)

In contrast to what Monson describes as taking place in Western classical music performance, in tango, performers are indeed expected to embellish and even alter the musical scripts they work with. Evidently, however, in this process tango musicians do not have the kind of freedom the jazz players at the centre of Monson's examination have. While conscious of these limitations, in order for the tangos of Beytelmann, Mosalini, LeCam, Gubistch or Marsili to sound as the composers envisioned them, the performers involved need to go beyond just "playing the parts."

I previously quoted Pablo Mainetti who noted how the members of his ensemble exploited every trace of tango they found in his scores. In my research, I have found that the same behaviour takes place in the performance of more traditional tango expressions. Musicians are expected to play what the composer notated, but they do not have to follow the notation precisely as written. Tomas Gubitsch underscored this point while talking to me about playing the music of Piazzolla. "In tango," Gubitsch told me, "writing shows minimal expressive markings; in Piazzolla's parts you rarely found an accent or a slur…you were expected to know how to phrase the part" (Gubitsch, conversation with the author, December 10th, 2007).[2]

Let's take the melody of Angel Villoldo's, "*El Choclo*," for example (Figure 6.1.) No tango musician will play the melody as notated in the piano lead sheet (Figure 6.1.a). Even if asked not to alter the overall rhythmic shape of the melody, the performer would likely articulate the melody in a manner similar to what is notated in Figure 6.1.b.

Figure 6.1 Angel Villoldo *EL Choclo* (ca. 1903)

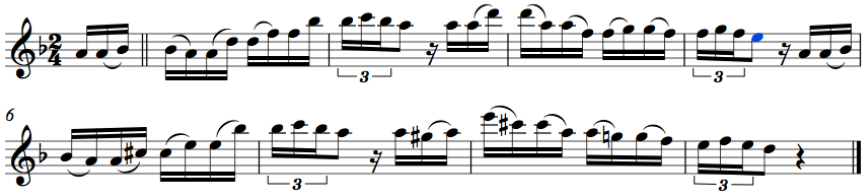


Figure 6.1.a "*El Choclo*" (ca. 1903) opening melody - as notated in the piano lead sheet

[2] "En la escritura del tango hay poquitisima notación expresiva; en las partituras de Piazzolla rara vez encontrabas un acento, rara ves veías una ligadura… se suponía que sabias como interpretar la parte."

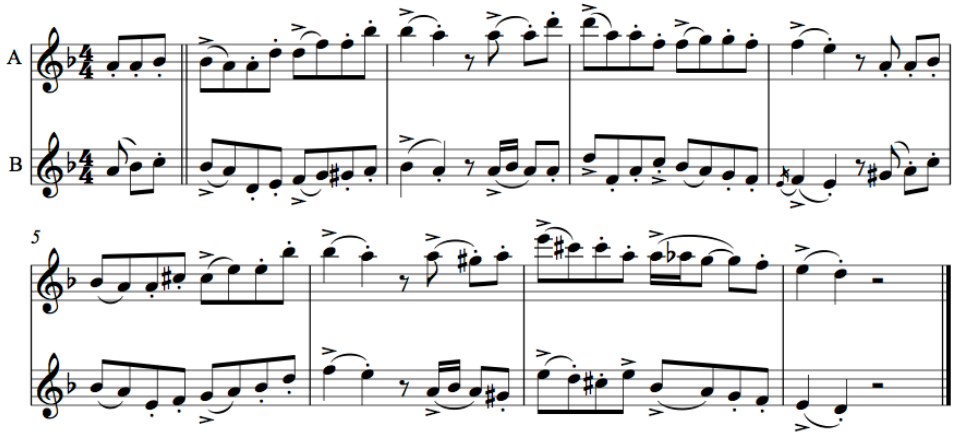
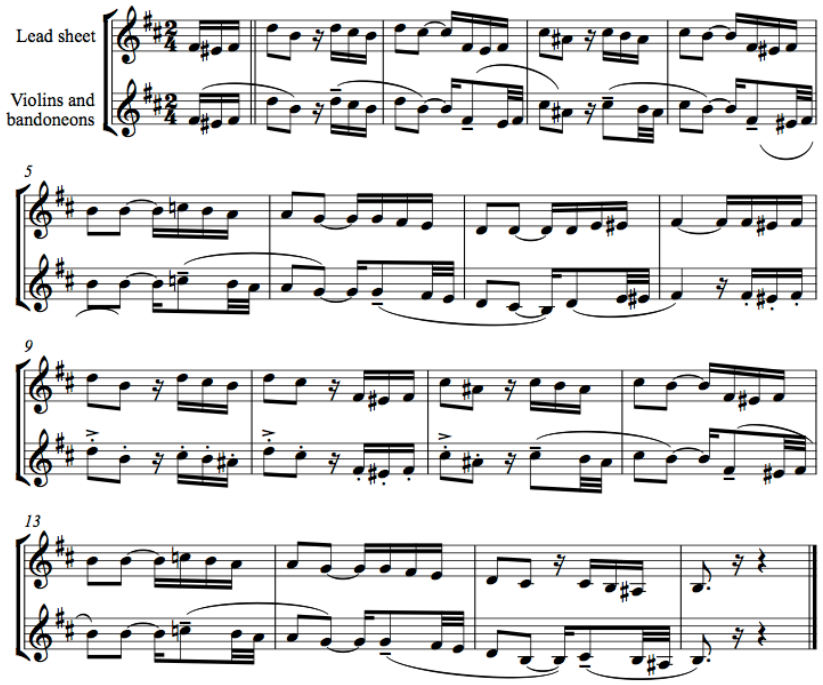


Figure 6.1.b "*El Choclo*" (ca. 1903) opening melody. A - as notated by Paulina Fain (Fain 2010, 34). B - as performed by Rodolfo Mederos[3]

As another example of the notation/performance difference, we can look at Osvaldo Fresedo's tango, "*Arrabalero*." Figure 6.2 shows the main theme of the piece as it appeared in print in an early piano lead sheet and as actually interpreted by Fresedo's ensemble in 1927.

Figure 6.2 Osvaldo Fresedo's "*Arrabalero*" – theme of opening section
Melody as notated in lead sheet and interpreted by Fresedo's band (1927)[4]



[3] From the album Tangos (2002) (listen to track 59 on the CD).
[4] The transcription of the melody of Osvaldo Fresedo's version of "*Arrabalero*" is by Mathieu Cepittelli (Cepitelli 2006).

Beyond "adjusting" the phrasing or altering intuitively the actual shape of the melody when the context allows, piano, violin and bandoneon players will likely introduce percussive effects to enhance the drive of the accompaniment. In his book *El Violín en el Tango*, Ramiro Gallo describes a number of percussive effects available to performers (i.e., *chicharras*, *tambor*, *golpe de caja*, *latigos*, *cepillo*, *strappata*).[5] These effects are sometimes notated, but in most cases violinists apply them intuitively to enhance a certain mood. As Gallo explains, "most of the time the effect is not written in detail; usually we only find its name or the word 'percussion.' Even where it is written, performers often take the notation merely as a reference and execute rhythmic models of their own invention" (Gallo 2011, 118).

Similarly, a tango bassist will be expected to make ample use of various anticipations (*arrastres*), appoggiaturas, and portamentos that are rarely notated. She or he will also mute some notes of the written part or turn them into non-pitch-specific sounds for rhythmic purposes. I addressed the use of non-pitched notes during a lesson with Juan Pablo Navarro.[6] "Many times, the noise is more important than the note itself,"[7] Navarro emphasized before demonstrating what he meant with a series of short marcato bass lines where "the groove" resulted from his nuanced use of percussive effects.[8] These "noises," as Juan Pablo called them, were the product of numerous non-traditional bowing and fingering techniques. In addition, effects like the *tambor*, *golpe de caja*, *cepillo*,

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[5] The *chicharra* (cicada) is the most common percussive effect in tango; it reproduces the chirping sound cicadas make in summer. It is executed on the third string of the violin, behind the bridge near the tail piece of the instrument. "The sound," Gallo states, "should be rasping but never unpleasant or annoying" (Gallo 2011, 119). The *tambor* (drum) "is a sound of indefinite pitch that closely resembles the striking of a snare drum" (ibid., 121). It is produced by playing pizzicato on the fourth string of the violin while interrupting the vibration of the string by placing a finger of the left hand between the third and fourth strings. The pizzicatoed string hits the nail of the finger, thus producing the sharp percussive sound. As the name suggests, the *golpe de caja* (box slap) is a gentle slap on the violin's sound box. It is a softer sounding alternative to the *tambor*. The *golpe de caja* is performed by resting the left hand on the sound box and striking it with the second and third fingers. The *latigo* (whip) has numerous variants. In essence, Gallo says, it is a "sweeping, rapidly executed glissando, starting at an indeterminate pitch and ending precisely and rhythmically, again at an indeterminate pitch" (ibid., 123). The *cepillo* (brush) can be described as a softer, almost muted *chicharra*. It is performed, Gallo instructs, by "sliding along the box down two strings in parallel to them, with the bow stick tilted inwards so that friction occurs with the bow hair closest to the bridge" (ibid., 126). The *strappata* is an effect commonly performed by the bassist. Its execution on the violin is similar. As Gallo explains, "With the tip of the bow playing up-bow we drop it early on the string and strike it" (ibid., 127). For the *strappata*, performers let the bow bounce on the strings, controlling the speed and accentuation.

[6] Juan Pablo Navarro is one of the most prominent tango bassists today. He is a member of *El Quinteto Real*, Diego Squissi's quintet, and the governemtne founded *La orquesta de tango de la ciudad autonoma de Buenos Aires*. He also plays with his own orchestra and has recorded as a solo artist.

[7] "Muchas veces es mas el rudio que la nota misma."

[8] These lessons took place every week during the months of November and December of 2012 at Juan Pablo's apartment in the *Barracas* neighborhood.

and *strappata* are also used by bass players.[9] As with violin parts, these effects are rarely notated but used intuitively by the experienced performer. In a situation where musicians find themselves freed from the constraints imposed by their role as a member of one of the orchestra's sections, tango musicians are, to borrow from Monson once again, "compositional participants who may 'say' unexpected things or elicit responses from other musicians" (Monson 1996, 81).

The heteroglossic language of a given tango ensemble is shaped by the tension/relaxation dynamic created by the interaction of all the involved voices at a particular time and place. Given the liberties instrumentalists often take in the execution of melodic passages or in the articulation of accompaniment patterns, and considering how these changes will subsequently force musicians to accommodate the nuances just created, each performance is thus unique. The importance of this interactive dynamic in the performance of tango was clearly underlined by a series of comments musicians made during my conversations with them. When Juanjo Mosalini talked about the sound of Tomas Gubitsch's ensemble as the result of five specific individuals, he was not only talking about the inimitable "colour" produced by that distinctive combination of musicians (Mosalini, interview with the author, February 2, 2011). He was also talking about how the "accent" of one of the members of the ensemble would fundamentally change the nature of the music dialogue. As bassist Patrice Caratini noted, "the music breathes according to the phrase, not the pulse" (Caratini, conversation with the author, December 01, 2010).[10] This primacy of the phrase over pulse puts a unique emphasis on the musicians' ability to respond to the particular ways in which their colleagues "breathe" the music.

Even in the context of large ensembles, there are instances in which the members of the group will have to adjust to the particular way in which the musician carrying the melodic line decides to "say" it. Osvaldo Pugliese's version of Juan Carlos Cobián's tango "Los Mareados" presents a formidable example of this common phenomenon (listen to track 55 on the CD). After an intense rhythmic section, the ensemble needs to bring the whole momentum down in order to set up the following slow section of the composition.

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[9] The thickness of the double bass strings prevents the performance of *chicharras* or *latigos*. Performers, however, have come up with a clever way of mimicking the sound of the *latigo* by rapidly sliding the fleshier part of the fingertips, often using the second and third fingers of the left hand, over the shoulder of the instrument. The fingers slide over the varnish and produce a high-pitched sound similar to that produced by the *latigo* effect on the violin.

[10] "La musique respire en fonction de la phrase, pas en fonction de la pulsation."

Figure 6.3 Osvaldo Pugliese's version of Juan Carlos Cobián's "Los Mareados" (mm. 33-37)

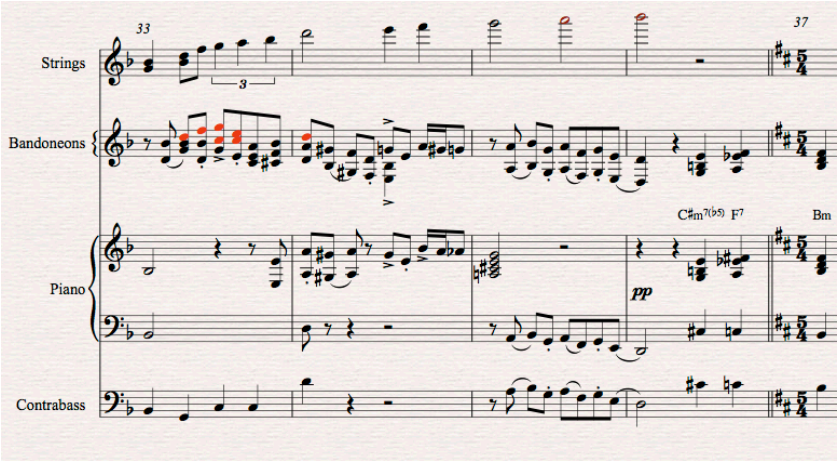

Figure 6.3.a "Los Mareados" by Osvaldo Pugliese (mm. 33-37)

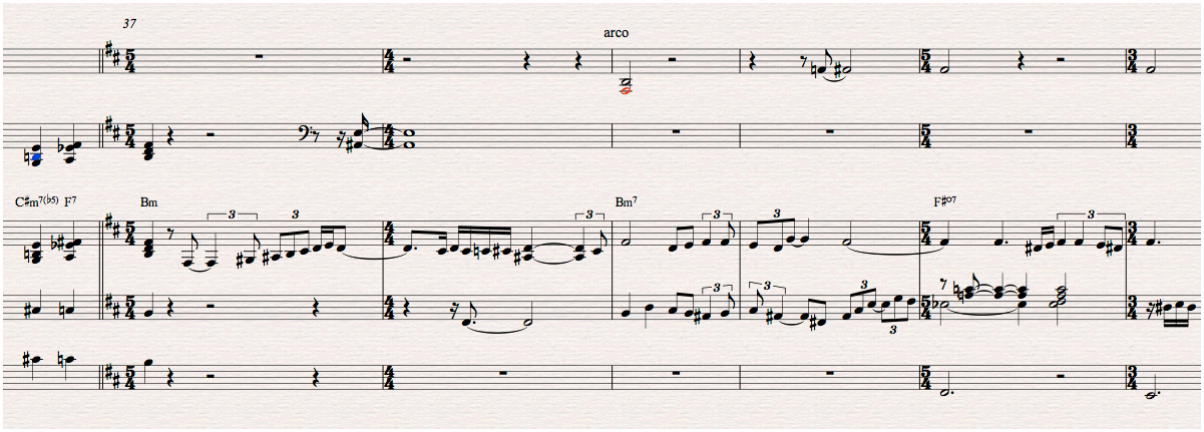

Figure 6.3.b "*Los Mareados*" by Osvaldo Pugliese (mm. 37-42)

The ensemble gently pulls the reins, as volume, impetus, and tempo decreases. Although the whole section is notated, what the bass, piano, and bandoneons do with the tempo in order to set the stage for Pugliese's gentle solo, simply escapes the descriptive possibilities of notation (listen to track 55 on the CD, the second section begins at 01:17). The term that comes to mind is what I call

synchronized liquidation of time.[11] The tempo melts but there is no confusion. Figure 6.3 shows a reduction of my transcription of this section.

In measure 37 (Figure 6.3.b), Pugliese sets up the new tempo and proceeds with a solo that glides over non-articulated pulses—the metric variation in the transcription is intended to reflect as close as possible the Pugliese's phrasing; the piece is in 4/4 throughout. Above his weaving lines, the strings introduce short accompaniment phrases. Pugliese plays with the tempo in order to accommodate his expressive needs, but this does not seem to present much of a problem for the other musicians who synch with the leading voice gracefully. The ensemble breathes as one single organism. The interaction between the members of the ensemble at that particular time makes that performance unique. In a subsequent performance, the bandoneons may take a bit longer in setting up the solo section or Pugliese may choose to accelerate considerably the tempo of the section. What is certain is that, despite all possible changes, the language of the orchestra will remain shaped by the distinct way in which the musicians articulate the "sonic effectuation" of the written music.[12] Above all, it is in this individual and collective effectuation where we recognize the uniqueness of each ensemble and of the genre as a whole.

This heteroglossic way of "sounding" the music is only one of tango's characteristics. As noted in the previous chapter, it is possible to produce more specific descriptions of tango by identifying distinctive traits when it comes to form, instrumentation, melodic design, accompaniment models and their relation with the melody, harmony, rhythmic structures, etc. Such detailed description, however, would have to be circumscribed to particular periods within the history of the genre since none of the parameters examined maintained the level of stability demanded by diachronic generalizations. Interpretative approaches have also changed over time; the ways in which musicians "sounded" the music varied according to contexts, functions, and individual ideas and needs. At the same time, is in the interpretative domain where lineages are more easily recognized. In short, it is easier to find commonalities among these various approaches in the performance practices "sounding" the music than in their syntaxes.

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[11] I'm not approaching the idea of "liquidation" in Schoenberg's sense. Schoenberg originally used the term liquidation to describe a common compositional technique involving the reduction of a large-scale musical idea to its basic form. The numerous ways in which tango musicians have explored the expressive possibilities of increasingly flexible approaches to tempo and overall pace offer an immensely rich area of study that has not been adequately examined. While understanding the processes that led to the development of these idiosyncratic modes of expression hinges on numerous musical, organological, textual, and choreographic considerations, particular attention, should be paid to the marked changes in the overall music narrative of numerous tangos after the consolidation of the *tango canción* subgenre in the late 1910s.

[12] I have borrowed the term sonic effectuation (*effectuation sonore)* from pianist and tango scholar Mathieu Cepitteli.

Normal literary language

Tied to the idea of heteroglossia is what Bakhtin called normal literary language. "The narrator's story or the story of the posited author is structured against the background of normal literary language, the expected literary horizon. Every moment of the story has a conscious relationship with this normal language and its belief system." According to Bakhtin, the intentions of the author are shaped by the tensions that exist between the language of the narrator and this "normal language." The author of the novel moves from one language to the other in a linguistic give-and-take that allows him to remain neutral, "a third party in a quarrel between two people" (Bakhtin 1981, 314).

Thus presented, Bakhtin's description seems more applicable to an opera or a musical theatre piece than a relatively short instrumental work such as a novel tango work where numerous traditions find themselves amalgamated. In a musical or operatic production, the composer may choose to jump between two distinct styles of music in order to contextualize a particular disagreement between two characters or show their contrasting personalities. It becomes impossible to talk about distinct music styles in the tango pieces examined in this dissertation. The composers do not switch from one to the other with the intention to "remain neutral," to use Bakhtin's words. The various styles and traditions involved in the conceptualization of these novel tangos are part of an indivisible whole: we can identify them, but none of them, even the most prominent ones, can be interpreted as a case of normal literary language in Bakhtin's sense. I do consider it useful, however, to draw on the idea of normal literary language when approaching the analysis of these works. From an analytical perspective, the usefulness of applying Bakhtin's idea does not stem from setting the compositions examined in this dissertation against the imaginary backdrop of one particular music genre that could be interpreted as a normal literary language. Its benefit lies in what can be learned from comparing the diverse responses that are likely to result from engaging with these works when the various genres that have contributed to their developments are set as potential normal literary languages.

Experiencing the works of Beytelmann, Gubitsch, Le Cam or Marsili against the imaginary backdrop of traditional tango reveals the numerous ways in which these composers have deviated from the sanctioned codes that have historically defined that practice. The exercise also allows us to recognize those elements enabling listeners to anchor their experiences of these expressions within the general milieu of tango. Interestingly, much can be learned about the tangoness of these

heteroglosic works when approached against the expected conventions of some of the other genres involved in their creation. Setting jazz, 20th century contemporary "art" music or the traditions of the Balkan Peninsula (key influence in Gerardo Jerez LeCam's work) as imaginary literary horizons offer new perspectives into the nature of the entanglements shaping these novel tangos. For example, imagining the languages of twentieth-century avant-garde composers such as György Ligetti (1923-2006) or Gerardo Gandini (1936 -2013) as normative when engaging with the works of Andre Andrea Marsili—Ligetti and Gandini were major influences for Marsili—will likely change our reaction to many aspects of her musical voice. In contrast to Ligetti's polyrhythm or the rhythmic density common to Gandini's compositional approach, the periodicity of some of her accompanying formulas and her approach to phrasing stand out. Thus, the analysis unveils nuances that would have not become noticeable against the backdrop of tango. Something similar occurs when experiencing the metric modulating, cimbalom-coloured textures of Gerardo Jerez Le Cam's 2010 *Tango Balcánico*. The contrast with the traditions of the Balkan Peninsula highlighted tango qualities in LeCam's work that would not have emerged as clearly otherwise.

Altering the imaginary backdrop of our experiences with these novel tangos can also provide us with valuable insights into the actual relevance of particular music traits or practices uncharacteristic in tango's tradition. For example, something that sets the arrangements of the BCM trio apart from previous approaches to tango is the freedom given to the bass. Even in the latest small ensembles of Piazzolla, the bass is often glued to the left hand of the pianist. Only a few groups had explored the possibilities of an increasingly independent bass line. One of these groups was the trio formed by pianist Osvaldo Berlingieri, bassist Fernando Cabarcos, and bandoneonist Leopoldo Federico, an ensemble that Gustavo Beytelmann named as one of his influences (Beytelmann, conversation with the author, January 29, 2011). Another important influence for Beytelmann in this respect was that of jazz, specifically the highly interactive dynamic of the revolutionary trio of Bill Evans. Although thoroughly composed, the bass in the music of the BCM trio is presented as an autonomous voice throughout the arrangements of *La Bordona*, the group's first CD. Any listener with some experience with tango is likely to recognize the untraditional nature of this idiosyncratic approach. While not given the sort of freedom a jazz bassist will find in the context of a trio, especially one like Evans', approaching the tango arrangements of the BCM trio with that expectation helps us in forming a clearer sense of the importance this compositional approach plays in the overall sound of the ensemble.

Double-voicedness

Bakhtin's concept of double-voicedness has been interpreted in numerous ways. In his 1998 Ph.D. dissertation, for example, Benjamin Parsons Broening explains that "if am speaking to you and I relate a sentence that I have heard before…in such a way that the source of those words is part of the utterance, then I am speaking with quotation marks. And those quotations marks are an integral part of the utterance. Bakthin describes this as a 'double-voiced' discourse" (Parsons Broening 1998, 15).

In his seminal, *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. contextualizes Bakhtin's double-voicedness as a word or utterance that achieves new purpose by the insertion of a "new semantic orientation" into a work which already had—and retains—its own orientation (Gates 1988, 50). It is this idea of an utterance as being capable of carrying semantic orientations that can be differently interpreted by individuals from distinct social strata, and cultures, that David Brackett found appealing in Gates' reading of Bakhtin. In his examination of James Brown's *Superbad*, Brackett notes that,

> …[a]nother factor contributing to the proliferation of meaning is the importance of *delivery*; that is, the manner of delivery profoundly affects the semantic content….This exemplifies what Gates has observed as one of the primary qualities of black discourse, what he terms (after Bakhtin) the "double-voiced" utterance, the manner in which a word can partake simultaneously of both black and white discursive worlds. (Brackett 1992, 312)

My approach to the idea of double-voicedness follows that of Brackett's. None of the tango works at the centre of this examination can be described as a weave of seemingly unrelated music traditions. Regardless of our reaction to a given piece, the musics show a carefully crafted sonic composition where the constituent elements can be identified, but not extracted without significantly altering the overall structure of the piece. This particular phenomenon suggests the existence of possible compatibilities between the styles that have informed the conceptualization of each of these pieces, commonalities that could have facilitated their integration. This idea gains traction when looking back at the exchanges that gave life to tango in the late nineteenth century. To a greater or lesser degree, elements of most of the cultural practices that participated in the dialogues that shaped early tango and its subsequent development can be identified in many expressions throughout the genre's history, in particular that of West African traditions, Argentine

rural expressions, Western European practices, and jazz. In the 1940s, Héctor María Artola and Argentino Galvan pushed tango to the limits of its border with jazz. Folkloric and rural elements can be found in a multitude of works, from the songs and milongas of Sebastian Piana to Salgán and De Lío's "*Aquellos tango camperos*." West African influences have been identified in the dance (Thomson 2005) and made explicit in works such as "*El Africano*," "*Pena Mulata*" or "*Milongón*". When it comes to tango's relation to western classic traditions, one only needs to run through the various composers that have been approaching the genre since the late nineteenth century: José María Palazuelos (1840-1893), Francisco Hargreaves (1849-1900), Ernesto Drangosch (1881-1948), Carlos Buchardo (1881-1948), Athos Palma (1891-1915), Juan Carlos Paz (1897-1972), to name a few.

The heterogeneity that shaped early tango is an attractive place to begin to understand tango's capacity to keep accommodating new and increasingly complex heterogeneities, each reflecting the more recent realities of composers, arrangers, and musicians. In this interpretation, the idea of double-voicedness becomes essential. It allows us to think of particular elements that could have facilitated the interaction between these forms. We can look at language-specific elements (i.e., chords, tonalities, or rhythmic schemes) but also at the performance practices that have allowed musicians to adapt easily to the particularities of the genre.

Many musicians I spoke to talked about non-Argentine students or colleagues that "just don't get it," meaning, in other words, individuals that have considerable problems adapting to the genre, particularly to its distinct approach to phrasing in the melody and accompaniment. On the other hand, I know a number of other non-Argentine musicians who have had no issues whatsoever adapting to the idiosyncrasies of the genre. Although not unique to them, this phenomenon has been most common among violinists. Numerous conservatory-trained violinists have the "chops" required to navigate the technical complexities of tango but show considerable problems when it comes to what Cepitelli labelled the "sonic effectuation" of the music (Cepitelli 2006, 38).

Interestingly, the interpretative demands of tango don't seem to pose considerable problems to most violinists coming from Eastern Europe, especially those comfortable with the folk traditions of their respective places of origin. When I asked Gerardo Jerez Le Cam about the nature of the relationship he developed with Iacob Maciuca, the Romanian violinist with whom he has been playing since he first arrived in France, he noted, "I'm not going to tell you that he did not have some issues when he first got into tango, but it was much easier for him to play tango than for me to

play his music" (Jerez Le Cam, conversation with the author, February 11, 2011).[13] During our conversation, it became evident that this apparent ease was primarily due to Maciuca's formative background. "A double culture," were the words Le Cam used to describe Maciuca's conservatory training and knowledge of popular music (Jerez Le Cam, conversation with the author, February 11, 2011).[14] Tango was part of Romania's music traditions. "It is a very special tango," explained Le Cam. "It resembles some of the tango that you heard in the 1920s. It is not square like the commercial tango you listen to in France or Germany. It is much more lyrical. It sounds like Gypsy music" (idem.).[15]

The experience of Toronto-based violinist Rodion Boshoer was very similar. Born in Odessa, Rodion developed a "double culture," to use Le Cam's term, from an early age. When he first approached Argentine tango, he felt "at home." It should be noted that a large number of the musicians whose styles helped shape the expressive nuances of tango during the first decades of the twentieth century were Jews from Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, and Romania.[16] In his book, *El tango: una historia con judíos*, José Judkovski, lists the name's of seventy-seven renowned tango violinists of Jewish background.

While the background of some of these new tangueros helped them with the expressive idiosyncrasies of the genre, others had to rely on their intuition and musicality. That was the case of Patrice Caratini, the bass player of the BCM trio. Although the Parisian craze for tango took place before his time, Caratini was familiar with more modern expressions of the genre, particularly as played by Piazzolla. He had never played tango before joining trio but, as he stated it, "it was not that hard" (Caratini, conversation with the author, December 01, 2010).[17]

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[13] "No te voy a decir que no le costo meterse en el tango pero… le costo mucho menos de lo que me costo a mi tocar su música."
[14] "El es de doble cultura, estudio en el conservatorio de Bucarest y a la vez, cultura popular."
[15] "Es un tango muy especial, se parece mucho a algunos de los tangos que se tocaban en la época del 20. No es cuadrado como el tango comercial que se escucha en Francia o Alemania, es mucho mas lírico, se parece mucho a la música Gitana."
[16] According to the website of AMIA, the largest association of the Argentine Jewish community, Jewish immigration to Argentina is divided into four main periods. From 1854 to 1889, the immigrants were from France, Germany, and Austria. They came as representatives of European businesses engaged in export and import. The first massive migratory wave took place between 1889 and 1914. Immigrants at this time were primarily Polish Jews, Ukrainians and, especially, Russians fleeing the pogroms encouraged by the tsarist regime. After WWI, Jewish immigration to Argentina resumed in intensity, with Jewish populations arriving mainly from Poland and Turkey (1920-1930). The fourth wave of Jewish immigration comprises two stages. The first took place in the 1930s and saw the arrival of refugees from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Romania, all fleeing the Nazi regime. In the post-WWII years, some 8,000 survivors of the holocaust settled in Argentina.
[17] "Ce n'était pas très difficile."

As noted in the previous chapter, there were two aspects that were new to him, namely the specific way in which the bow is used in tango and, most important, the way in which the music "breathes"(Caratini, conversation with the author, December 01, 2010). The situation forced Beytelmann and Mosalini to codify a series of stylistic elements in order to pass them on to Caratini. "It took months," underlined Beytelmann during an interview (*Brecha*, October 10, 1986). Although it did not come immediately to him, Caratini learned the language while he maintained his own "accent," one that shaped the dialogues and the final sound of the ensemble.

There is another application of an idea that in many senses is similar to Bakhtin's double-voicedness, namely W.E.B. Du Bois' double-consciousness. Monson finds in the experiencing of "twoness" at the centre of these theories their common ground (Monson 1996, 81). In his famous *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois described a

> peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois 1903, 2)

It is not in the examination of the music but the individuals behind the music(king) (Small 1998) where Du Bois' idea of double-consciousness becomes significant. It offers an interesting way to approach the examination of the numerous conflicts of identity Argentine musicians abroad have been trying to resolve through their music (see Chapter 7).

Centripetal and centrifugal forces of language

According to Bakhtin, the centripetal and centrifugal forces of language are, respectively, the centralizing and decentralizing forces in any language or culture. As he explains, "At the time when major divisions of the poetic genres were developing under the influence of the unifying, centralizing, centripetal forces of verbal-ideological life, the novel—and those artistic-prose genres that gravitated toward it—was being historically shaped by the current of decentralizing, centrifugal forces" (Bakhtin 1981, 272).

Michael Holquist, the editor and translator of *The Dialogic Imagination*, explains that "the rulers and the high poetic genres of any era exercise a centripetal—a homogenizing and hierarchicizing—influence; the centrifugal forces of the clown, mimic and rogue create alternative 'degraded' genres down below" (Bakhtin 1981, 425). For Bakhtin, the centrifugal forces were most clearly at play on the stage of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles where street songs, folk sayings, and anecdotes mixed with the "languages" of poets, scholars, and monks. In these situations, there was no language centre at all. As he observed, "all 'languages,' were masks and no one 'language' could claim to be an authentic, incontestable face" (Bakhtin 1981, 273). Thus the novel was a de-normalizing and therefore a centrifugal force. While the kinds of power dynamics and hierarchical distinctions depicted by Bakhtin in reference to medieval languages do not apply to the mechanisms of tango musical production I am concerned with, Bakhtin's fundamental model of language interaction, governed by centralizing and decentralizing forces and multiple competing social voices, is of interest and worth considering.

Following this model, it could be said that novel tango/tango nómadecompositions should be considered centrifugal forces. This is because, in their own ways, they all stand against clear hierarchies and claims of authenticity. However, it turns out that simply using Bakhtin's centrifugal/centripetal labels is not particularly instructive. The same could have been said without resorting to such intricate propositions. My interest reaches beyond this initial categorization to focus on the actual presentation of these concepts as centralizing and decentralizing forces in tango. Such a focus on presentation offers an interesting model with which to examine some of the processes shaping our perception of the work of tango composers. It suggests that our experience of their music is shaped by the interaction of two contrasting forces continually guiding us toward or away from our notions of the genres involved, primarily tango.

Most listeners are likely to have first approached the compositions analyzed in this section with a series of preconceived ideas about the Argentine genre. Either because they knew the music of the group beforehand, because the term tango was used in the promotional material (Figure 6.4), due to the fact that the concert was part of an event organized around an Argentine theme, or simply because one or more bandoneons were involved—"the instrument [bandoneon] is capable of activating by itself the signifier *tango* in the mind of any listener" (Buch 2012, 165).[18]

[18] "[e]l bandoneón…es capaz de activar por si mismo el significante *tango* en la mente de cualquier oyente."

Figure 6.4 Various promotional materials[19]

[19] 1. Promotional flyer for the concert series *Nouvelle expression de la musique argentine* by the Gubitsch/Calo duo at Paris' *Le Petit Opportun*; 2. Pomotional poster for a tango festival featuring at Savigny-Le-Temple featuring Gerardo Jerez Le Cam's ensemble (photo: Alberto Munarriz); 3. Promotional flyer for a concert of *Tango Moderne* by the Gubitsch/Calo duo at Paris' *Tambo Luratha*; 4. Page from the brochure for the 1986 *Jazz et Musiques Métisses Festival* featuring the BCM trio at Mazouing, Angoulême.

Regardless of the specific reasons that lead listeners to set tango as "normal literary language," the majority of them likely began experiencing these novel tangos with a series of expectations pertaining to traditional expressions of the genre. Throughout their involvement with the music, these notions were probably constantly confirmed, questioned, or simply refuted by the centralizing and decentralizing power exerted by particular events in the performance. This is where I consider the benefit of my reading of Bakhtin's dialogic model lies.

As George Lipsitz noted, a dialogic perspective allows us to avoid some of the issues associated with previous analytical methodologies as it "eschews formalism by finding meaning not in forms themselves, but in how forms are put into play at any given moment to re-articulate or dis-articulate dominant ideology" (Lipsitz 1990, 102). The following analysis aims to identify some of the compositional and interpretative elements through which tango composers have managed to explore their artistic inquietudes within the realm of tango.

The BCM trio re-reading of "*La Cumparsita*"

The arrangement of "*La Cumparsita*" was one the first works of the trio composed by pianist Gustavo Beytelmann, bondoneonist Juan José Mosalini, and double bassists Patrice Caratini. Like many of the arrangements recorded in the trio's first album, *La Bordona*, "*La Cumparsita*" was the product of a collaboration between trio members Beytelmann and Mosalini. Both composers described their re-reading of Gerardo Matos Rodríguez's tango from 1917 as the result of a series of rehearsals in which ideas were tossed back and forth among the musicians.[20] Mosalini compared the process to the collaborative efforts that shaped many of the arrangements of the orchestra of Osvaldo Pugliese (Mosalini, conversation with the author, April 29, 2011). Following his socialist leanings, Pugliese considered his orchestra a cooperative where everyone's voice was heard.[21]

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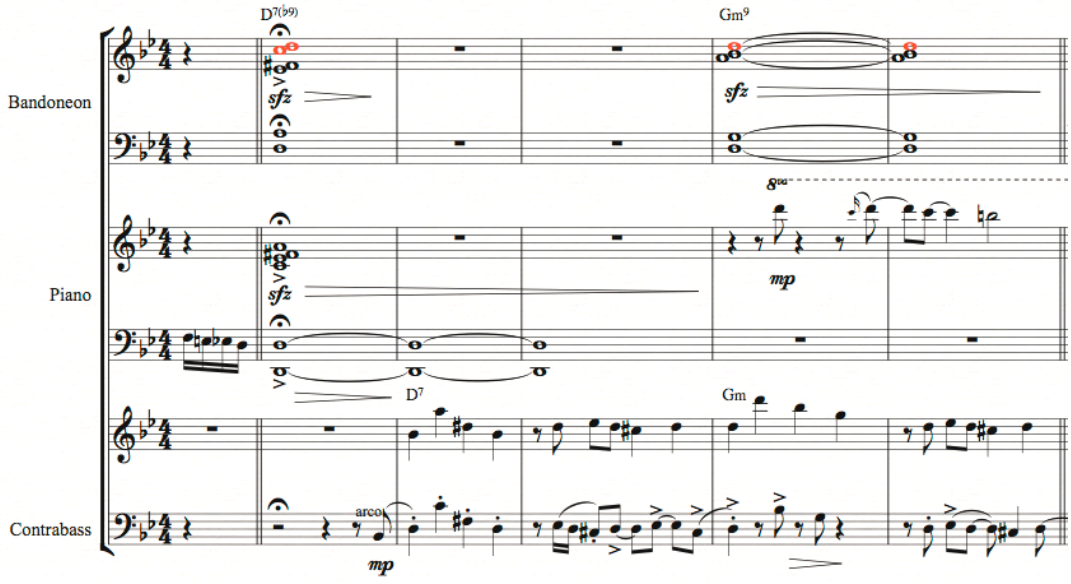
[20] Gerardo Hernán Matos Rodríguez (March 28, 1897 – April 25, 1948) was born in Montevideo, Uruguay. Composed in 1917, "*La Cumparsita*" was premiered the same year by Robert Firpo's orchestra and first recorded for the Victor label by a quintet pianist Alberto Alonso and bandoneonist Enrique "Minotto" Di Cicco assembled for the occasion.

[21] In the book Osvaldo Pugliese, violinist Emilio Balcarse rememebered that Pugliese "was with us in all aspects. There were no musical or financial differences...whoever brought the best ideas, the most successful ones, was invited to compose, something not common. Everything was talked. He gave you space, the possibility to express what we felt and how we felt it...it was a real partnership with" (Balcarse 2005, 172). [convivia con nosotrtos en todos aspectos. No habia diferencias ni en los mucials ni en lo econbomico…el que aportaba las mejores ideas, el que tenia mas existo, era

The trio's arrangement of "*La Cumparsita*" begins with a short chromatic run ending on an accented D7b9 chord. The chord is spread over the span of three ocatves and voiced with an intention to emphasize some of the dissonant intervals formed by the chord tones: on the top of the chord, the bandoneonist's right plays a Eb-F#-C-D; the voicing is shaped by the stacking of an augmented second (Eb-F#,) a tritone (F#-C,) and a second C-D. In addition, the bottom and top notes of the voicing are separated by a major seventh. The musicians let the sound settle, and over the lingering sound, on the upbeat to the second bar, the bass brings in the main melody of the composition. The melody of "*La Cumparsita*" starts with an overtly unmelodic motive, a simple dominant seventh chord arpeggiated as root, 7th, 3rd, root. It's certainly no earworm, but those four notes are all that any listener familiar with the piece needs to hear in order recognize the work (Figure 6.5). The sparseness of the of the texture is not very tango-like, nor is having the melody introduced by the lowest sounding instrument. The way in which Caratini interprets the melody, however, leaves no doubt about the direction in which the listeners are taken from a stylistic perspective. With every *arrastre* (slid anticipation) and accent, Caratini further anchors the idea of tango in our ears. I have added a staff between the double bass and piano parts with the melody of "*La Cumparsita*" as it appears in most lead sheets.

Figure 6.5 "*La Cumparsita*" by the BCM trio



invitado a componer, cosa nada comun. Se conversaba todo. Daba espacio, la posibilidad de decir que sentiamos y como lo sentiamos…era una real convivencia con la musica].

Figure 6.5.a The BCM trio's "*La Cumparsita*" – A section (mm. 1-5)

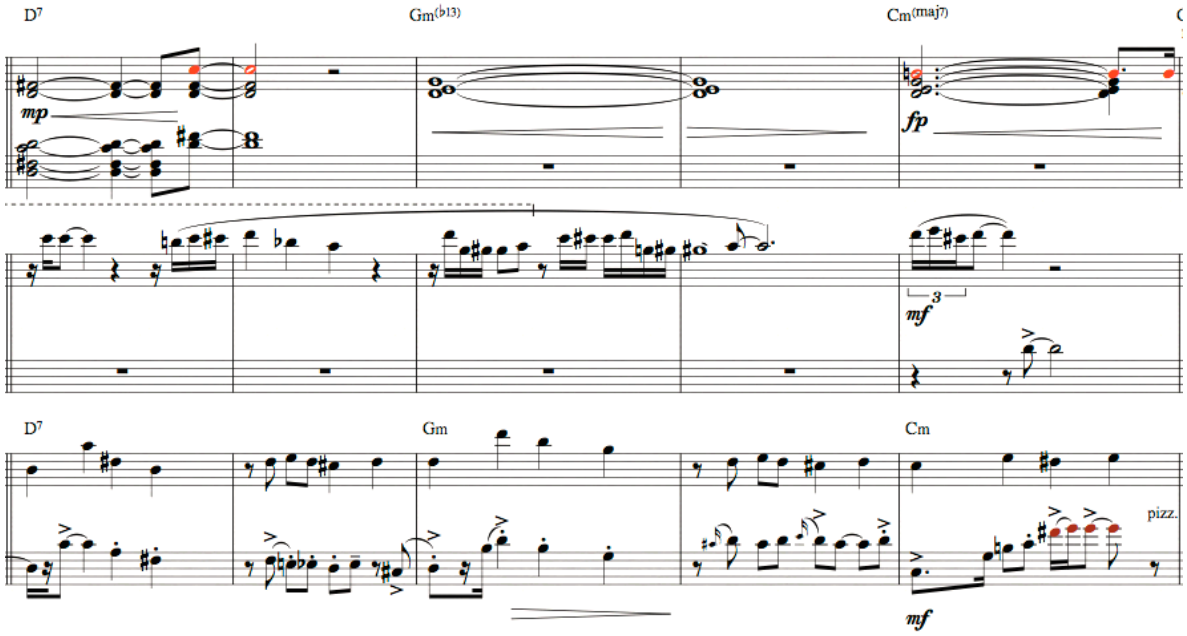


Figure 6.5.b The BCM trio's "*La Cumparsita*" – A section (mm. 6-10)

Over the foundation of the melody, Beytelmann and Mosalini embellish the texture through minimalistic colourings. In measure 10, Caratini begins to "estrange" himself slowly from the original melody (see previous chapter on the idea of "controlled estrangement"). By measure 11, the melody is no longer acting as an achor. It is at this exact point when Beytelmann's short motivic interventions begin to quote recognizable variations of the composition's popular theme (mm. 11 and 13; Figure 6.5.c).

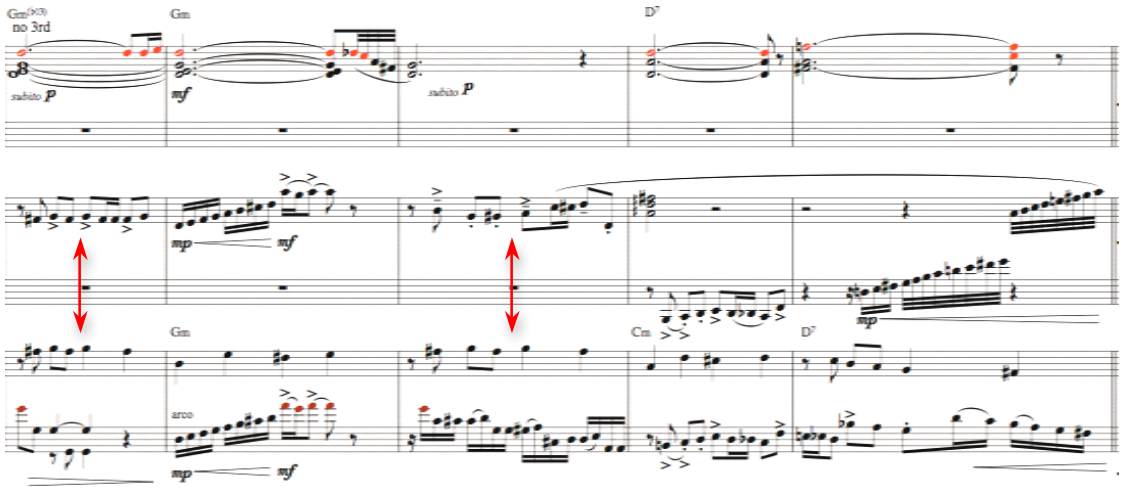


Figure 6.5.c The BCM trio's "*La Cumparsita*" – A section (mm.11-15)

The added staff with the skeleton of the original melody shows that the ensemble keeps the original structure almost intact. In addition, despite what we may be inclined to think, given what we hear, the overall harmonic structure of the original is also maintained almost unaltered; only the addition of some upper extensions, the avoidance of the 3rd in the minor chord in measure 11, and the extension of the dominant over the subdmonant in measures 14 and 15 stand out.

The harmonic design of the arrangement deserves special attention. As highlighted in the previous chapter, early tangos such as "*La Cumparsita*" were composed over very simple harmonic structures. The opening section of the original "*La Cumparsita*," for example, shows only three chords (i, iv, and V7). Melody, rhythm, and, especially, interpretation and expressivity were the main priorities for early tango musicians. In other musical contexts, the simplicity of these early models wouldn't present much of an issue for composers trying to enlarge their palette of expressive possibilities.

The i-iv-V7 harmonic scaffolding common to many tangos lends itself to reharmonizations of various degrees of complexity. In the treatment of traditional tangos, however, complex reharmonizations are not common. This is primarily due to the intimate relationship that exists between the melody and the harmonic accompaniment. First, arpeggiation of structural chords is very common in many of the melodies of the compositions that make up tango's traditional canon. Figure 6.6 shows the prominence of arpeggiation in the melodic stucture of some classic tangos. The extensive use of arpeggios in early tangos combined with the importance often given to the melody in all sections of a composition makes reharmonizations difficult.

Figure 6.6 Arpeggiation in some early tango melodies

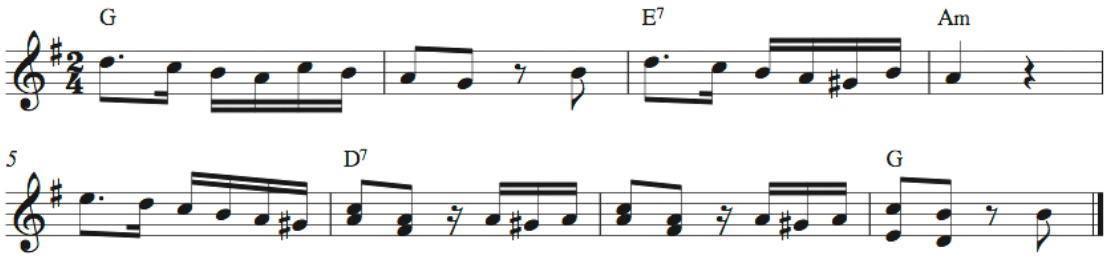


Figure 6.6.a Francisco Canaro – "*Cara Sucia*" (1918) – B section

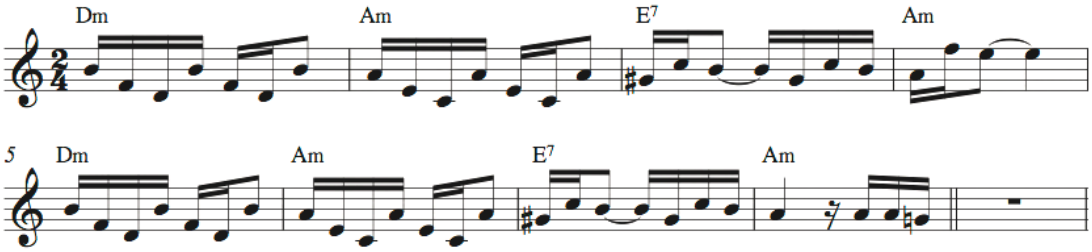


Figure 6.6.b Eduardo Arolas – "*Comme il Faut*" (ca. 1917) – A section

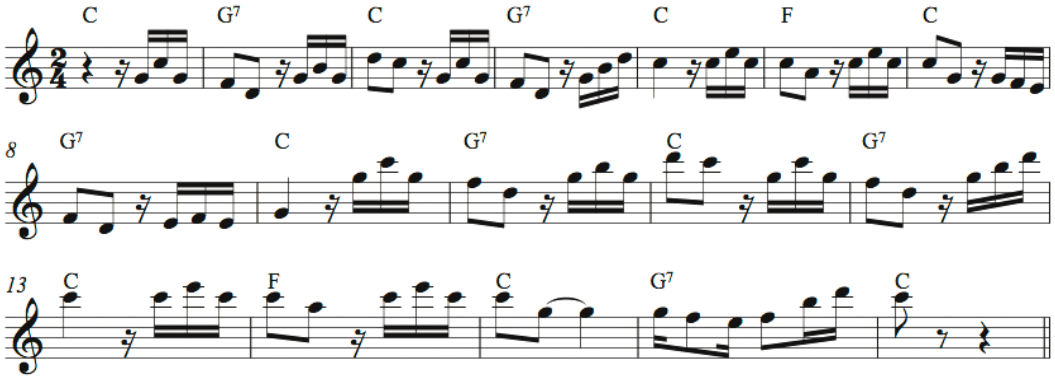
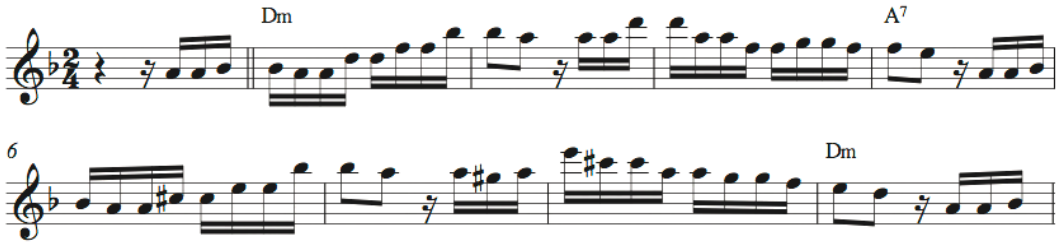


Figure 6.6.b Cátulo Castillo – "*Organito de la tarde*" (1924), A section

Furthermore, in some instances, the addition of chords to the original structure seems to interfere with the flow and natural cadence of the melody as originally conceived. The opening melody of Angel Villoldo's famous "*El Choclo*" is a good example of this situation (Figure 6.7).[22]

Figure 6.7 Angel Villoldo's "*El Choclo*"



[22] The exact date in which "*El Choclo*" was composed is unknown. We do know, however, that the piece was premiered in Buenos Aires in 1903 at the restaurant *El Americano* by the orchestra of José Luis Roncallo.

The melody self-propels over a harmonically static foundation. I don't consider it a coincidence that in their settings of the work, arrangers known for their non-traditional inklings (e.g., Astor Piazzolla and Enrique Mario Francini) did not modify the harmonic structure of the opening section. In fact, the embellishment of the accompanying harmonic texture is likely to interfere with the forward momentum created by the melody.

This is not to say that traditional tangos are not often reharmonized. In *La Orquesta Típica*, Julian Peralta offers a few examples (Figure 6.8). As Figure 6.8 shows, his reharmonizations are simple, mostly secondary dominants, or inversions used to create a stepwise descending or ascending bass line, something that Piazzolla would turn to as one of his numerous stylistic marks.

Figure 6.8 Julian Peralta's Reharmonizations (Peralta 2008)

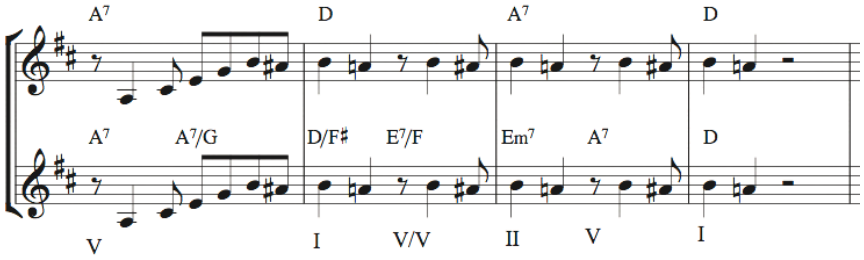


Figure 6.8.a Aníbal Troilo – "*Toda mi vida*" (1941) – A section

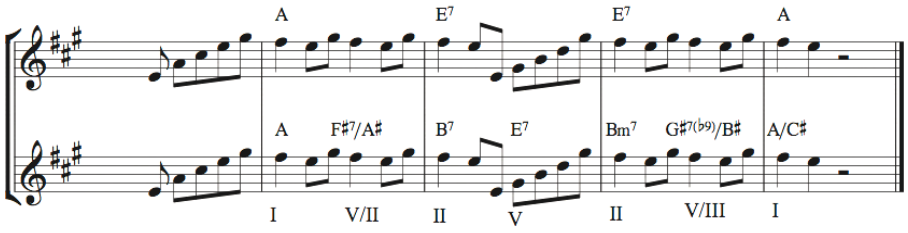


Figure 6.8.b Osvaldo Fresedo – "*El Once*" (ca. 1920) – A section

Returning to "*La Cumparsita*," the melody makes ample use of arpeggiation, something that, as noted above, makes reharmonizations difficult if the intention of the arranger is to maintain the usual relevance given to the melody within the sections of a tango. When I asked Gustavo Beytelmann about how he dealt with this particular issue, he mentioned that he came up with his own way of reconciling the particularities of his harmonic language and the straightforwardness of early tango composition when it came to harmony. Beytelmann explained, "It is a process I call

borroneo (smudging), a way of approaching harmony that allows me to be and not to be with it at the same time." The idea, as he described it, follows Stravinsky's approach to enlarging his harmonic universe. As Beytelmann commented, "Stravinsky broadens his harmonic universe not through the use of new chords but via introducing notes that do not belong to the chords: passing notes, neighboring notes, anticipations, ritardandos, appoggiaturas, etc." (Beytelmann, conversation with the author, February 20th 2011).[23]

This "smudging" of the foundational harmony is the mechanism that allowed Beytelmann to introduce new textures within the somewhat restrained harmonic framework inherent to a composition like Matos Rodriguez's "*La Cumparsita*." In a nutshell, the final balance is achieved through the constant conflicts Beytelmann articulates by deploying musical ideas that destabilize our perception of tango within an harmonic framework designed and, most important, performed in such a way as to reinforce that same perception. The B section of the arrangement exhibits many aspects of this compositional approach (Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9 The BCM trio's "*La Cumparsita*" – B section

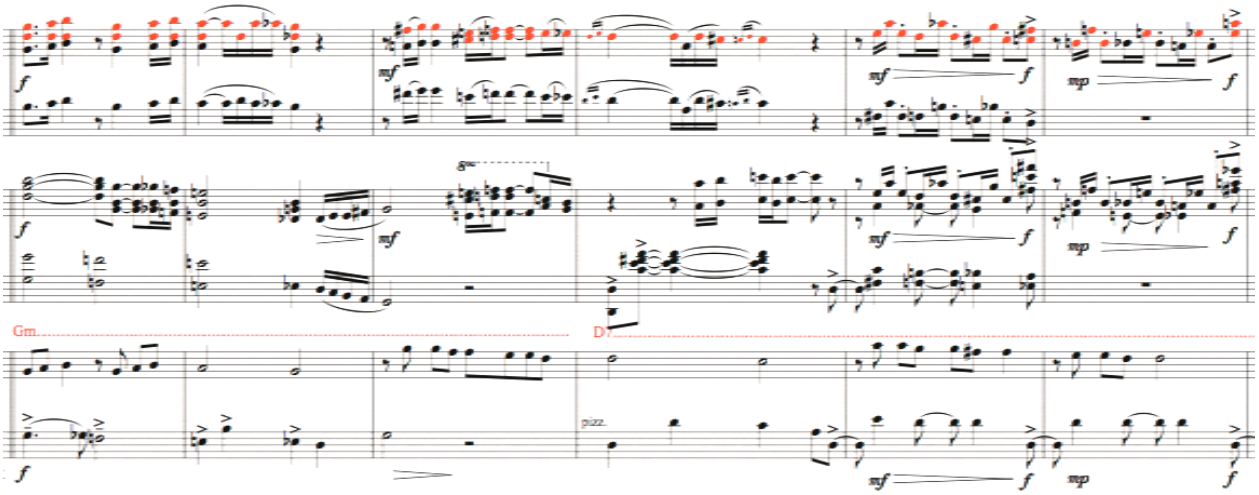


Figure 6.9.a The BCM trio's "*La Cumparsita*" – B section (mm. 16 to mm. 21)

[23] "Stravinsky va ampliando el universo armónico pero no por la formación de nuevos acordes sino por la utilización de notas que no pertenecen a ellos: notas de paso, bordaduras, anticipaciones, retardo, apoyatura, etc."

The stave directly above the bass shows the melody of the B section as commonly presented in lead sheets. I have also included the original chord progression. As heard in the opening section, the tonal centre of this segment (Gm, the minor subdominant) is clearly outlined by the melody. In addition, the section is characterized by a slow moving harmonic rhythm. Similar to what takes place in the opening section of "*El Choclo*," the nature and pacing of the melody does not seem to require harmonic motion.

Figure 6.9 shows that, although actively involved in shaping the rhythmically dynamic texture of the segment, the bass confirms the original harmonic framework. There is an added progression in measures 16 and 17 (Figure 6.9.a) that is repeated in measures 24 and 25 (Figure 6.9.b) resulting from the stepwise descending bass motion. As explained above, these sorts of reharmonizations were commonly used in traditional arrangements of tangos in order to add movement to sections of a certain harmonic stillness.

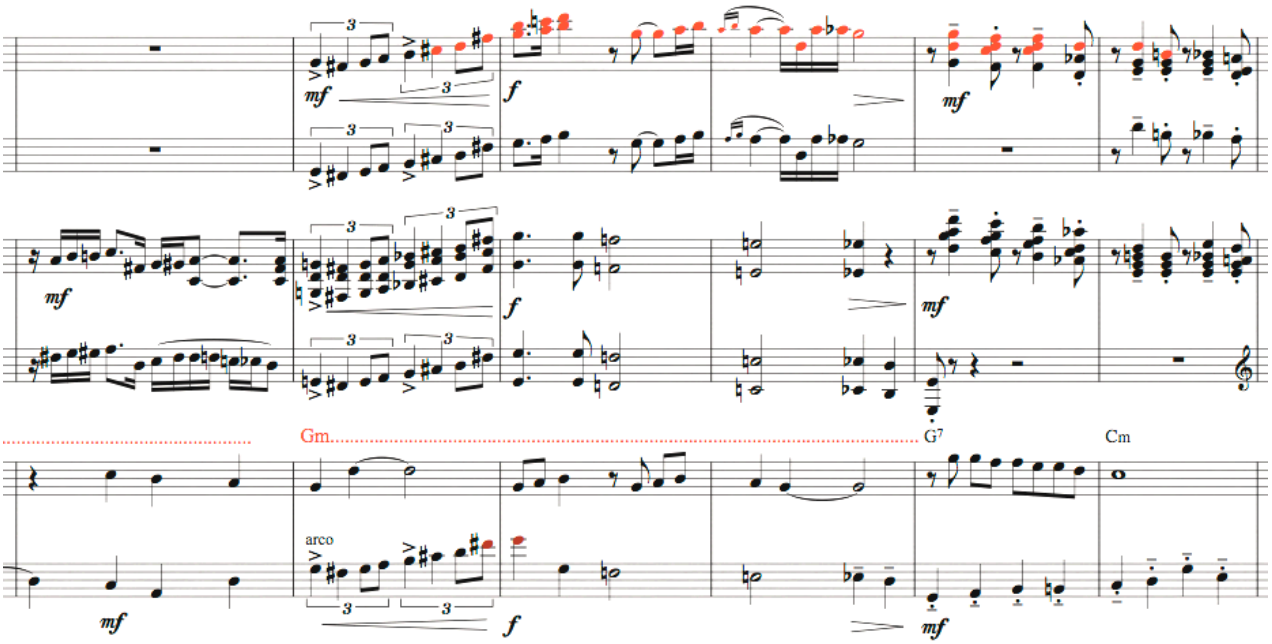


Figure 6.9.b The BCM trio's "*La Cumparsita*" – B section (mm. 22 to mm. 27)

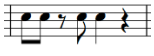
There is no ambiguity here. If the liberties Caratini takes in the interpretation of the melody, and the chromatic runs we hear in the last two bars of the previous sections begin to push listeners away from the realm of tango, the opening two bars of the B section bring them back with force and gusto. In measure 16, we hear the section's unmistakable theme. Once again, it is not the melody

that carries the weight of the Argentine tradition, but the way in which the musicians perform it. In the last measures of the A section, the trio is push forward energetically. Although the bass and the piano's left hand are not playing marcato, the feeling of four beats to the bar is overriding. The ensemble lands on the downbeat of measure 16 with force and the bandoneon takes the melody.

As listeners, we keep tapping our feet, but in a matter of milliseconds we realize that our beating is out of synch with the music. The energy rises but the ensemble pulls back. The change is not measurable. Mosalini "rests" intuitively on the second beat of the section's opening measure and, on the upbeat of the third measure, after an immeasurable delay, Beytlemann joins him. Over the last beat and a half of the measure, Mosalini continues with the melody over a descending chromatic figure that Beytelmann phrases *arrebatado*, brushing over the tempo until the following downbeat.

One of the things bassist Patrice Caratini told me he found particularly challenging about tango, was the way in which the music "breathes" in relation to the phrase, not the actual pulse. The trio's performance of the opening measures of the B section helps us understand why an experienced musician like Caratini would feel that way. More important, they show us how critical this malleability in the interpretation of tempo is in shaping our perceptions of tango.

The use of Beytelmann's smudging technique can be heard in the chromatic motive he introduces in the bandoneon and piano in the last two beats of measure 18 or in the chain of diminished seventh chords he sets above a rhythmic pedal in the bass (mm. 20 and 21). As previously mentioned, our reading of the piece is shaped by a constant conflict between forces that question and reinforce our perceptions of tango. In measures 20 and 21, the aforementioned chain of diminished seventh chords begins to blur the listener's sense of tonal reference, something totally uncharacteristic to tango. This, however, is done over the bass articulating a pattern similar to the traditional *síncopa*.[24] In measure 22, Beytelmann "smudges" the underlying V7 chord in order to set the momentum for the return of the second section's main theme in measure 23. The section closes with the 16th-note descending line on the piano over a highly syncopated accompaniment (mm. 28-30).

[24] In a nutshell, the *síncopa* is an accompaniment pattern based on the following scheme  . There are, howevere, multiple ways of approaching the interpretation of the *síncopa*.

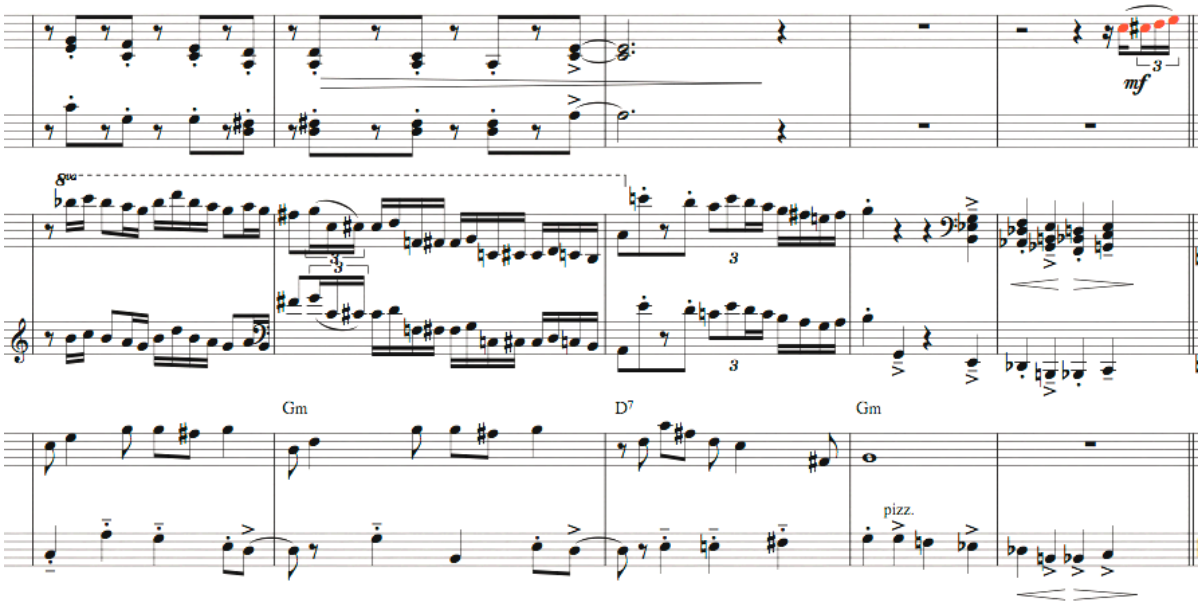
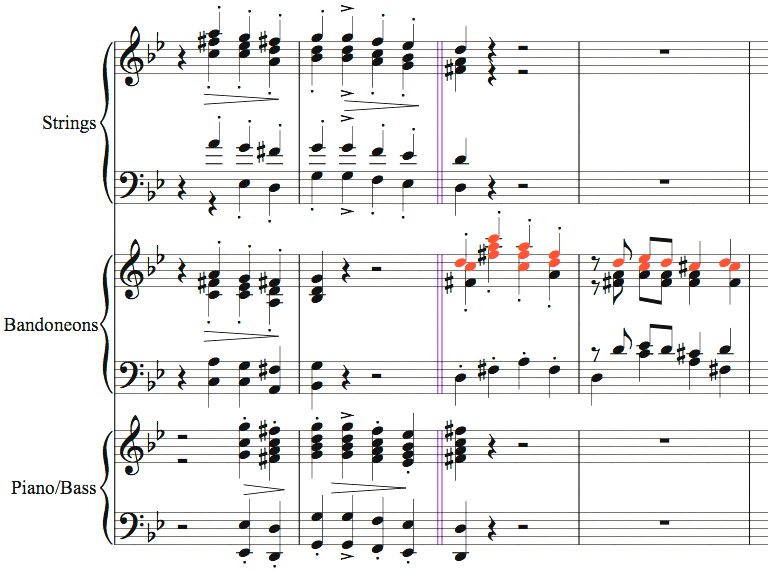


Figure 6.9.c The BCM trio's "*La Cumparsita*" – B section (mm. 28-32)

Between the bass pulsing the beat and the bandoneon accentuating the upbeats, Betylemann weaves a highly dynamic passage that becomes progressively more rhythmically dissonant. In measure 29, the piano juxtaposes over the accompaniment a chromatically embellished arpeggio that begins on the upbeat of the first beat and then continues by accentuating the second 16th of the following three beats of the measure. The displaced accentuation makes Beytelmann sound slightly behind Mosalini and Caratini. We hear the piano pulling back even though there has been no alteration in the tempo. In the following measure, we still hear Beytelmann pulling the reins. This time, however, the effect is the result of the pianist actually pulling back while resolving the phrase in the fashion Ramiro Gallo described as *La Pelotita* (see previous chapter on the idea of "controlled estrangement")—the notation tries to get as close as possible to the increasing subdivision of the line. Once again, over numerous uncharacteristic elements, Beytelmann interprets the line in a fashion that brings to mind an improvised ending played by any experienced *tanguero*.

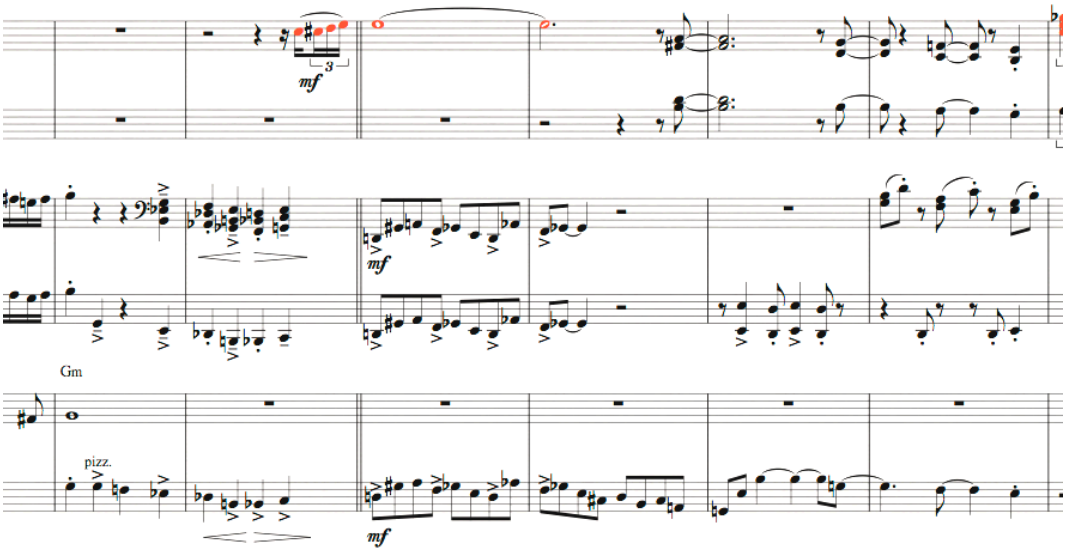
At times, tango arrangers add certain melodic aspects to a given composition and, over time, such additions become incorporated as part of the piece. This is the case with the descending line that commonly sets the return to the main section in "*La Cumparsita*." Figure 6.10 shows the line as interpreted by the ensemble of Juan D'Arienzo in 1972.

Figure 6.10 Juan D'Arienzo's "*La Cumparsita*" 1972 – motive leading to A section



In the BCM trio's version, the G-F-Eb motive is introduced in measure 31 in order to announce the return of section A. The expected D does not arrive on the downbeat of 32. Instead, we get a Db major seventh chord (chromatic smudging) leading to the actual downbeat of the A section in the following measure (Figure 6.11.)

Figure 6.11 BCM trio transition to the A section (mm. 31-36)



The new A section returns but does not bring with it its characteristic melody. In its place, we hear a highly rhythmic motive designed to blur the expected dominant sound. Once again, the perception of tango is destabilized by an unrecognizable event. The particular event, however, accentuates a 3-3-2 subdivision of the measure, an accentual scheme often found in traditional tango that became a common feature in numerous tango expressions after Piazzolla's ample use of it. In retrospect, we realize that the interplay between the F (E#) and F# used by Beytelmann to blur the sense of tonality at the beginning of the A section was also an anticipation of the role semitonal tensions would have over the next measures, especially the pairing of D and Eb, key components of the composition's main melody (mm. 3, 5, 7, and 9 in Figures 6.5.a and 6.5.b).

A more exhaustive analysis of the piece would keep enlarging the list of syntactic elements that allow us to hear the trio's rereading of "*La Cumparsita*" within the aesthetic domain of tango. In the remaining sixty plus measures of the piece, there are numerous other instances where parts of the original composition or traits tied to traditional tango are brought to the fore in order to balance the destabilizing push effected by other aspects of the arrangement. At the same time, during the course of this discussion I have emphasized that these elements achieve stylistic significance when realized through the specific interpretative practices of the musicians. Ultimately, what allows us to hear this piece as a tango is the performers' intimate knowledge of the practices that have historically shaped the genre. The trio's bandoneon player had been steeped in the tango tradition since his childhood; he had played with ensembles of Leopoldo Federico, Horacio Salgán, Osvaldo Pugliese, and many other illustrious tango figures. The phrasing characteristic of the genre, the way in which the bandoenon breathes the music, the abrupt way in which dynamics change, and, above all, the malleability of the pulse and its effect on the musicians' approach to rhythm, are, thus, all second nature for him.

Beytelmann was not as involved with tango prior to his arrival in France, but was certainly familiar with its fundamentals. This background, combined with what many of his colleagues called an uncanny ability to "get the music," allowed him to rapidly develop a profound understanding of the genre. Patrice Caratini was the weakest link when it came to tango, but as shown by the

recordings of *La Bordona* and the other two albums that followed it,[25] under the tutelage of Beytelmann and Mosalini, he rapidly learned the interpretative idiosyncrasies of the Argentine genre.

Tomas Gubitsch's "own kind" of tango

While reviewing the opinions of critics and commentators regarding the music of the Tomas Gubitsch/Osvaldo Calo duo in the early 1980s, I questioned if tango should have acted as a point of initial reference at all. At the time, traditional tango was not a tradition the two young musicians counted among their most influential; nor was it one Gubitsch or Calo had engaged with at a professional level. The musicians' relationship with tango changed considerably in the following years. From a musical perspective, Calo became much closer to the genre than Gubitsch. Calo began to play in the tango orchestra Juan José Mosalini started at the Genevilliers Conservatory. In 1995, he formed a tango duo with French violinist Sébastien Couranjou (they recorded their fist album, *La Muerte del Angel*, in 1997). He also recorded with Mosalini and the legendary violinist Antonio Agri (1932-1998) in 1996.

In contrast, after the trio with Calo and double bassist Jean-Paul Celea disbanded in the mid-1980s, Gubitsch turned to composing and arranging for a variety of artistic and commercial projects. By the mid-1990s his lucrative work as a composer, arranger, and conductor had taken over his musical life to the point that he stopped playing the guitar. It was around 2005 that he returned to the instrument, after having abandoned it for almost eight years. Interestingly, Gubitsch's return to his role as a performer also meant a return to the musics that had defined his identity as a guitarist. As evidenced by his biography, tango was not a significant agent in his professional development (Gubitsch always considered himself a rock musician more than any other kind). But years of exile and the process of reconciling his Argentine and French realities evidently changed things. In the liner notes of *5*,[26] the first CD of Gubitsch's new project, he explained:

> After twenty-eight years of being away from my country I think that the same process that lead me back to my guitar also pushed me towards a homecoming, playing tango. To be more precise, *my own kind of tango*. And if I put it this way, it

[25] After *La Bordona* (1982), the trio recorded *Imagenes* (1986), and *Violento* (1989).
[26] The number 5 titling the CD is a reference to the quintet that recorded it. After the initial quintets of Astor Piazzolla and Horacio Salgán in the 1960s, the formation (piano, double bass, guitar, bandoneon, and violin) became a sort of standard for small tango ensembles.

> is because in artistic affairs one always believes that one does the choosing; I am not sure whether this is really the case. In my case I would say that tango left me no choice. (Gubitsch 2006; emphasis in original)

"My own kind of tango." This is something most of the musicians I interviewed could have said. In fact, although not in those precise words, most of them did say it. However, the comment was always more a sign meant to discourage comparisons with other ways of understanding and relating to tango than a declaration of uniqueness. As in, "This is the product of my personal relationship with this tradition."

The analysis of "L*a Cumparsita*" above shows that the relationship the members of the BCM trio established with tango was one of intimate closeness. While not tied to traditional molds, their music reveals an unmistakable desire to maintain a clear and identifiable affiliation with the genre. This is not the case in the relationship Gubitsch developed with it. In reference to the motivations shaping his own style, Horacio Salgán noted,

> …the fantasy[27] pushed me away from tango, and my obsession was to get inside tango, with fanatical faithfulness. And notice how curious: *my style is born and takes shape through a process inverse to that of Piazzolla. He shapes his out of the need to get out of tango and I, mine, out of the selective fixation to get into tango*. (emphasis is mine; quoted Ferrer 1980, 498)[28]

Salgán's idea of two contrary directions functioning as equally viable ways of constructing a relationship with a music genre like tango offers a good way to describe the contrasting nature of the relationship Beytelmann and Mosalini, on the one hand, and Gubitsch, on the other, established with tango. While it would be a mistake to say that Gubitsch wanted to "get out of tango," he did not want to get too close or find himself directly associated with the genre as a whole. He explained to me,

> Overall, I do not like the tango. Yes, I'm interested in what you can do with it…or from it. You may consider it paradoxical that a guy who thinks he is doing tango tells

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[27] Salgán uses the term fantasy in reference to the rhythmically loose and harmonically adventurous approach he showed in his initial dealing with tango.

[28] "La fantasía me alejaba del tango y mi obsesión era ¡meterme dentro del Tango! Con fidelidad fanática. Y observe que curioso: mi estilo nace y cobra forma por un proceso exactamente inverso al de Pizzolla. El plasma el suyo por la necesidad de salirse del tango. y yo, el mío, por la fijación excluyente de quererme meter dentro del tango."

you he does not like it, but really...well, it's paradoxical. (E-mail message to the author, September 27, 2007)[29]

In the context of this paradox, it becomes interesting to address the opinion that, according to Gubitsch himself, some of his listeners had recognized some tango elements in the music he wrote for film or contemporary ensembles. As expected, he explained that he had been surprised by such observations, since he, himself, was not aware of using or intending to use elements of tango in these works (Gubitsch, conversation with the author, December 12, 2007). Given, however, that Gubitsch did not remember the exact works that purportedly prompted listeners to identify the existence of some tango elements, I was not able to examine them. Gubitsch did write other pieces that, as he acknowledged to me, were certainly the product of a conscious dialogue with tango. He described these as an exchange that was not aimed at tracing and building a lineage but, nevertheless, one definitely aimed at beginning an active interaction. Among these works, the two I have chosen for analysis belong to Gubitsch's 2006 CD entitled *5*. They are, namely "*Te acordas de mi?*," and "*De los hermanos*." These two works show the numerous and intricate compositional processes through which Gubitsch weaves into the sonic tapestry of his compositional output a number of idioms, musical traditions, and aesthetic conceptions conventionally disparate from [but nevertheless connected to the traditional Argentine tango ethos.

In essence, Gubitsch incorporates into his music the defining characteristics of various non-tango forms as a way to articulate the eclectic nature of his musical conceptions within the framework of tango. Following the fundamental differences that exist between the relationships Gubistch and other musicians such as Beytelmann or Mosalini have established with tango, it becomes evident that the idea of traditional porteño tango as a frame of reference cannot be standardized. The various parameters that can inform the design of these conceptual frameworks are numerous. At the same time, beyond clear differences, there are a number of factors, particularly at the interpretive level, that lead to interesting concordances.

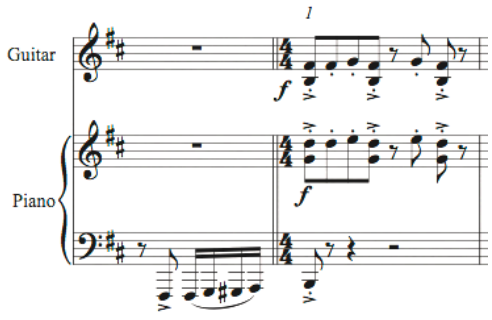
"Ambiguous" interpretations and rhythmic anchorage

[29] "Globalmente, no me gusta el tango. Sí me interesa lo que se puede hacer con él… o a partir de él. Te parecerá paradójico que un tipo que piensa estar haciendo tango te diga que no le gusta, pero en realidad... bueno, es paradójico."

During one of our conversations, Gubitsch mentioned that, as a composer, he finds one of the most attractive characteristics of tango to be its rhythmic ambiguity. Ambiguity is an attribute that, according to him, identifies most urban musics (e.g., rock, flamenco, jazz, tango). Ambiguity for Gubitsch does not point to vagueness, however, as it is sometimes read. He notes that if there is something indistinct or unclear in these musics, it is certainly not their rhythmic schemes. For Gubitsch, ambiguity points instead to the almost omnipresent possibility of there being two or more coexisting interpretations of a given rhythmic articulation, something akin to Bakhtin's idea of double-voicedness. I focus on this idea of ambiguity because it is primarily through the manipulation of the possible interpretations of his rhythmic structures that Gubitsch takes us into the realm of tango.

"*Te acordás de mi?*," the first track on *5*, opens with a three-minute solo guitar introduction developed around key thematic elements of the main piece. Beyond the momentary bursts of virtuosity we hear throughout the introduction, the section weaves slow-moving melodies over a slow-paced texture that brings to mind the solo work of U.S. guitarist Ralph Towner, not a tango from the Argentine River Plate. This initial perception is altered abruptly, however, when the composition proper begins. With a sudden change in dynamics and overall colour not uncharacteristic of tango compositions, the ensemble sets the groove that shapes most of the composition. The band is sent in motion by a short chromatic run, functioning as an *arrastre* in the pianist's left hand that lands on the downbeat of measure one. Few figures are more common in tango's syntax (Figure 6.12).

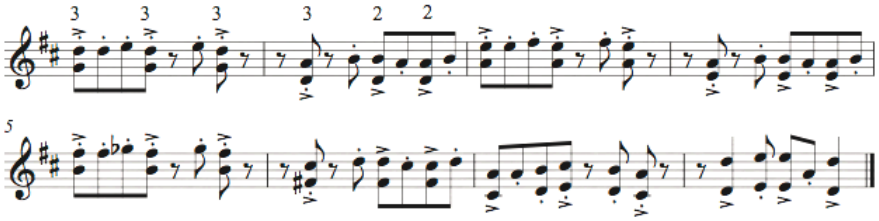
Figure 6.12 Tomas Gubitsch's "*Te acordas de mi*?" (mm. 1 composition proper)[30]



[30] All the fragments of Tomas Gubitsch's pieces reproduced throughput this chapter have been taken from copies of the original scores the composer gently send me.

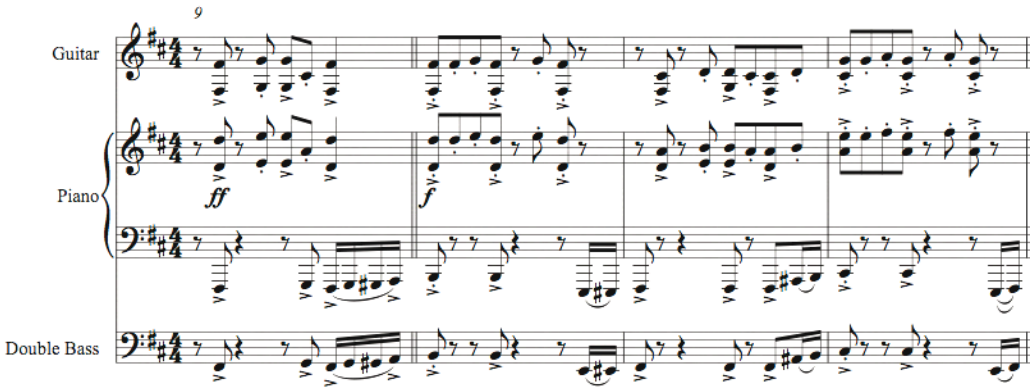
The rhythmic scaffolding of the piece is based on a series of variations of the 3-3-2 scheme popularized by Piazzolla (Figure 6.13). Once again, we are not taken back to tango's golden age but to the more contemporary expressions of the genre that were most important in Gubistch's musical formation.

Figure 6.13 Tomas Gubitsch's "*Te acordas de mi?*"
3-3-2 scheme variation in main accompaniment



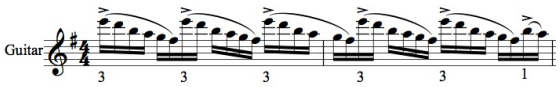
In addition to the actual patterns used, Gubitsch adds a series of chromatic appoggiaturas and arrastres in the left hand piano part in order to enhance the accentual dynamism, a move that brings the texture closer to tango (Figure 6.14). Needless to say, like the musicians in Pablo Mainetti's ensemble, Osvalso Calo, the pianist in the recording milks the tango possibilities out of every single motive, line, and accent.

Figure 6.14 Tomas Gubitsch's "*Te acordas de mi*?"
Chromatic appoggiaturas and arrastres (mm. 9-12)



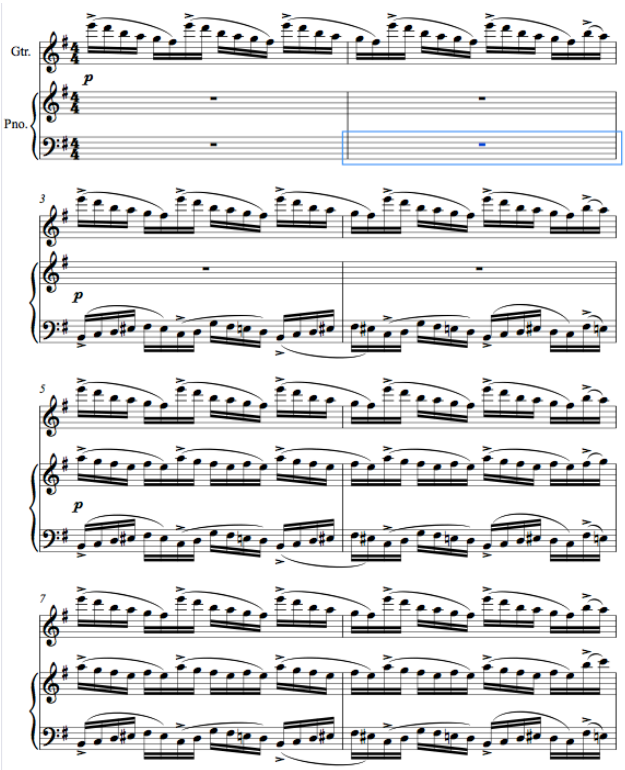
Gubitsch also uses a variation of the 3-3-2 scheme in order to shape the basic rhythmic structure of "*De Los Hermanos*." The accentual pattern (3-3-3-3-3-1) is established through the repetition of a six-note descending motive (Figure 6.15).

Figure 6.15 Tomas Gubitsch's "*De Los Hermanos*"



In this case, however, an initial association with the 3-3-2 accentual scheme, hence with Piazzolla-like textures, is not easily established. In fact, the overall symmetry of the texture, which evolves from the manipulation of a few repeated melodic cells (Figure 6.16), points to 1960s minimalism, not to Piazzolla or older tango expressions. Beyond the repetitive nature of the pulse-driven texture (a characteristic that defines a large portion of the oeuvre of minimalist pioneers like Steve Reich or Philip Glass), the minimalist influence is further emphasized by modality and by the out-of-phase effect achieved by the juxtaposition of cells of dissimilar melodic contour in the piano and guitar (another common feature of 1960s minimalism).

Figure 6.16 Tomas Gubitsch's "*De Los Hermanos*" (mm. 1-8)



The pulse driven texture is maintained uninterrupted until measure twenty-five. In measure ten, however, there is a change in our interpretations of this weave of melodic motives. Until measure ten there is no apparent conflict between centralizing and decentralizing forces, all the voices involved (i.e., guitar, piano's left hand, and piano's right hand) are in harmony from a stylistic perspective. In measure ten, however, the bandoneon brings in a different voice into the dialogue, a voice that challenges the overriding minimalist colour by introducing an initial pull toward tango (00:26 on track 58 on the CD). The sound of the bandoneon is usually enough to take most listeners to the realm of tango, even in instances where the actual music does not encourage such associations. In this case, however (as in most tangos), it is not the sound of the instrument but the sound-ing of the music what clearly sets the context and expectations. The way in which Mosalini (Juanjo) strikes each chord leads us unmistakably tango. The sharpness of his attack, preceded every time by the almost imperceptible sound of the bellows' breath, is the sonic representation of the idiosyncratic way in which tango bandoneon players use the bounce of the leg on which their rest their instrument to shorten the articulation (Figure 6.17).[31]

Figure 6.17

The picture on the left shows Juanjo Mosalini during a concert at Paris' *Vingtième Théâtre* on January 17, 2011 (picture by Alberto Munarriz). The image shows Mosalini resting the bandoneon on his right leg. Like most bandoneon players, Mosalini uses a piece of black fabric, often velvet or silk, in order to protect his pants and allow the instrument to slide more comfortably. Moslaini has both legs covered since he often switches the leg on which he rests the instrument. The picture on the right shows Astor Piazzolla during a recording session (picture published as part of the article *Masterclass del Piazzolla intérprete; La Nación*, January 27th, 2013). Bandoneon players also play standing, resting the bandoneon over the raised leg—as the story goes, Piazzolla initially adopted this position in order to visually situate himself as the leader of his ensembles when playing in public.

[31] The bandoneon, named alter its creator Heinrich Band (1821-1860), was originally conceived as a portable organ for the performance of religeous music. With the help of a neck strap, the instrument was held much like a current accordion.

Another clear pull towards tango comes from Mosalini's approach to the phrasing of the segment. Particularly important in this respect is the way in which he uses ties in order to shape the phrase.

Until the twenty-sixth measure, our experience is shaped by the interaction of two key contrasting forces, one (the bandoneon) guiding us toward notions of tango and the other (the guitar and piano) pulling us away from them. The interplay continues until the moment when the drive of the piece is interrupted and the whole ensemble comes to rest on a whole-note (00:45 on the recording). In the following section, the preceding conflict is not longer part of the experience. The minimalistic push vanishes and the overriding feel is that of tango; not any tango, however, Gubitsch's own kind of tango. Here, the pull towards tango rests on the rhythmic anchorage of the section. The bass and pianist's left hand join in a marcato in four that the bassist sets up with a gentle arratsre. Over the marcato, the pianist's right hand shapes the accompaniment following key elements of the melody. Once again, it is not the music but Osvaldo Calo's effectuation, to use Mathieu Chepitelli's term, what enhances the tango pull.

In this analysis of the BCM trio's version of "*La Cumparsita*" or the works of Tomas Gubitsch I have placed considerable emphasis on the knowledge musicians shared about tango. I have argued that it is primarily this knowledge and the performative pratices used to materialize it that allows musicians to set their expressions within the sphere of tango. These key apects become an even more important part of the musical equation when dealing with works in which the nature of the compositional material defies fundamental features of the tango tradition (works like Andrea Marsili's "*11 heures 25*" or Gerardo Le Cam's "*Siete Esquinas*" for example).

Marsili's *"11 heures 25*" is one of the compositions included in the first CD of *Fleures Noir*, the orchestra she formed in Paris soon after her arrival. In the score I received from the composer, the piece is described as a "*milonga lenta-berceuse*" (slow milonga-lullaby; listen to track 60). The piece opens with a series of unconventional chords presented over a slow moving (quarter note at approximately 66 bpm) alternation of 5/4 and 6/4 measures. The texture is sparce and Marsili's choice of registers and sustained high pitches results in an overall sense of eeriness. This far into the piece, only the ensemble's instrumentation highlights a possible relationship with tango. The first recognizable element from the tango tradition is introduced in measure fifteen, namely the milonga pattern. In the first two instances (mm. 15 and mm. 16), the pattern is outlined rhythmically over a repetaed C (01:10 in the recording). It is in measure seventeen when the characteristic melodic contour of the pattern (root, flattened sixth, and its descending resolution to the fifth) is presented. The milonga motive is unmistakable and it anchors a new referential point. From then on, the

listener's experience is shaped by a constant conflict between centralizing and decentralizing forces, a continuous pull towards and away from tango. Certain short melodic passages articulated by the lead violin reinforce the milonga feel, but it is primarily through the interpretative nuances Marsili adds to the piano line that we can anchor that perception.

The same occurs with Gerardo Le Cam's "*Siete Esquinas*," the first piece in Le Cam's 2010 recording, *Tango Balcanico* (listen to track 61). As hinted by the title, "Seven Corners," the composition was written in 7/8. In the recording, the 7/8 scheme is articulated as a fast moving 2-2-3 pattern that is maintained unvaried throughout the composition. These sorts of additive meter structures are foreign to tango. As shown throughout this analysis, numerous non-traditional elements have been incorporated into the tango tradition. The use of additive meters, however, is particularly difficult in the context of tango since they can't easily accommodate the binaryness that characterises tango's models of accompaniment, even those that, as Marsili pointed out, were designed to 'escape' the binary nature of the music (Marsili 2012, 47). From a tango perspective, this incongruity limits considerably the amount of elements at the disposal of the composer. From an interpretative viewpoint, however, there are no noticeable restrictions. In fact, the ability of musicians to phrase and embellish following the expectation associated with the genre is crucial.

Conclusion

When approaching tango as a meaningful vehicle to channel their new musical and expressive needs, artists face a complex balancing act. Their voices are shaped by their own and, at times, highly conflictive relationships with tango, the genre's tradition, and its native Argentina. At the same time, framing their work within shared perceptions of tango hinges on their ability to navigate the musical and aesthetic parameters that over time have come to define the genre. I offered a brief description of the musical and aesthetic parameters that have traditionally defined the genre in chapter five. The discussion focused primarily on the role performance practices play in shaping the sound of tango. Similarly, through the analyses presented in this chapter I have emphasized that what allows us to frame our experience of these works within the idea of tango is not to be found in easily isolatable harmonic, rhythmic, or melodic traits. While idiosyncratic elements can be identified, what is most significant when bringing these sonic entanglements into

the realm of tango is the knowledge musicians have gathered through their experience with the genre and their colleagues. I have also suggested that the heterogeneity that shaped the emergence and early development of tango offers an attractive place to begin to understand the genre's capacity to keep adapting to new and increasingly complex dialogues, each reflecting the more recent realities of composers, arrangers, and musicians.

Chapter 7

FrancoArgentines and the role of tango in shaping artistic and individual identities.

In this chapter, I concentrate on processes of adaptation and identity creation among the musicians at the heart of this dissertation. I pay particular attention to the way in which the various relationships these musicians have built with and around the tango tradition have been used in the articulation of their multidimensional identities. I begin by looking at what prompted some of these artists to rekindle or initiate a relationship with tango. In some cases, their engagement with the Argentine tradition was not part of a consciously designed artistic path but the result of unexpected need. Following the examination of this unforeseen need to begin or reshape an already existing dialogue with tango, I explore what the genre had to offer to these individuals. What has tango come to represent within the Argentine context? What role has the genre played in the processes of creation and performance of these artists' identities? The chapter concludes with a summary where the various aspects examined throughout the sections of this dissertation are brought together to strengthen the initial idea of tango as a perfect medium for the creation and performance of the multifaceted identities of Argentine artists living in Paris since the late 1970s.

The "tango syndrome"

When Beytelmann landed at Charles de Gaulle airport he only carried with him a few suitcases and a notebook with the names of some contemporary composers that friends and colleagues in Argentina had suggested as possible contacts in Paris. Beytelmann's idea was to focus on his work as a composer of contemporary concert music. Shortly after his arrival, Beytelmann checked the names on the notebook and went, in his own words, to "knock on some doors." Little time passed until the initial optimism turned into frustration. "The worlds of contemporary music are the same today and yesterday,"[1] commented Beytelmann. "They [the composers he contacted] were less interested in what I had done as a composer than the aesthetics to which I ascribed or with

[1] "Los mundos de la música contemporánea son iguales hoy y ayer."

whom I had studied. That made me realize that I did not have much place in that world."[2] Beytelemann was clear about his goals, but also knew that he was not willing to compromise his values to obtain them. "Beyond that which I considered I had to do, I was not going to serve these guys coffees in order to get a piece performed! Not that I did not have the time, it just was not my view of the world..." (Beytlemann, conversation with the author, January 29, 2011).[3]

Beytelmann's initial disappointment gave way to a period of questioning and rediscovering motivated by the need to understand his position as an individual and artist in the new French context. One of the composer's first realizations was that there was a clear distinction between Beytelmann the artist and Beytelmann the person. "Faced with the attitude of those within the context of contemporary music that were more interested in my credentials than in the sound of my music, I began to distance myself from the idea of being a contemporary composer. In the process, it became easier to find a justification to stay here; there, private and artistic lives are intertwined. I was the only one who could set the different elements that made me into a dialogue. That mixture is what I am; it shows me naked!" (Beytlemann, conversation with the author, January 29, 2011).[4] It is at that moment, as a result of the dialogues prompted by the questions that emerged in the new reality he was living in, that tango entered the picture. Why tango of all Argentine music traditions? We know that folkloric expressions were part of the same festivals where Beytelmann heard his first tangos back in his native Santa Fe, Argentina. Later, he entered into contact with numerous genres while studying and working in Buenos Aires; he even explored some of these musics to considerable depths.

In her book *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* Marta Savigliano presents us with the idea that "tango and exile (in the sense of 'being away from home' for whatever reason)" are intimately associated (Savigliano 1995, xiii). In this situation, the result may be a case of what she calls the tango syndrome. As she explains,

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[2] "Los tipos estaban menos interesados en lo que yo había hecho que por la estética a la cual yo adscribía o con quien yo había estudiado, eso me dio la pauta de que yo no tenia mucho lugar en ese ámbito."

[3] "Mas allá de que eso era lo que yo pensaba que tenia que hacer, yo no le iba a servir los cafés a esos tipos para que me tocaran una pieza! No es que no tuviera el tiempo, simplemente no era mi concepción del mundo…"

[4] "Frente a la actitud de aquellos dentro del contexto música contemporánea mas interesados en mis credenciales que en como sonaba mi música, fui dejando de lado la idea de ser compositor contemporáneo. Se me fue haciendo mas claro encontrar un justificativo para vivir acá; allí se mezcla lo privado y la vida artística. El dialogo entre los diferentes elementos que me formaban no podía hacerlo nadie mas que yo–esa mezcla soy yo; me muestra desnudo!"

> …it is more than common for any argentino living abroad to connect the experience of longing and nostalgia to the tango. It is a recurrent pattern… to be affected by the tango syndrome after being deprived for a while of our argentino "environment." (Savigliano 1995, xiii)

Understanding this phenomenon as a syndrome (i.e., an inevitable serious medical condition) would be practical. Unfortunately, it is not pathology that will help us understand the situation. Savilgiano considers an exiled argentine's return to tango as:

> a shield against the dissolution of identity....Tango represents a particular area of Argentina at home, but it assumes national representation abroad. Argentina becomes a nation and tango its symbol. (Savigliano 1995, 4)

While her assertion is generally correct,[5] the phenomenon transcends the need to process an "experience of longing and nostalgia." In these particular situations, tango often becomes a multi-purpose tool, especially for musicians who perceive the genre as a language open to dialogues that would allow them to accommodate their multiple artistic inquietudes. It is tango's ability to accommodate these dialogues without losing its identifiable nature that allows the possibility of coordinating several ways of understanding Argentinean-ness.

This process of rearticulating identity has taken many forms, each defined by the particular circumstances of each individual. Beyond that, it was part, in one form or another, of the experiences of each of the musicians with whom I spoke: those who were forced into exile in the late 1970s but also those who chose to emigrate in the following decades.

I did not want to play tango… it was what came to my fingers!

Tango did not play a prominent role in the musical life of Gustavo Beytelmann prior to his exile. As a young man, he heard tangos in multiple contexts. Several times throughout his professional life, he was involved with the genre, but always sporadically. It was in Paris, where the relationship per se began. In his own words:

[5] At this point, it becomes even more difficult to detach my personal experience from my interpretations. Not much time elapsed since I left Buenos Aires in 1998 to the time when I began to show clear signs of the "tango syndrome."

> …and in that solitude, that I did not know I had, took over, what came to my hands was tango...The problem was that which was coming from me and the image I had of me. I could have held the image of what I thought I was, but there was something inherently false in all that...it was not what was coming from my guts!" (Beytlemann, conversation with the author, January 29th, 2011)[6]

The initial shock of exile was followed by a long process of reconciliation with this new phase of his musical life and his newly discovered music persona. As he explained:

> I was so convinced I was that [classical contemporary composer] and nothing else...It was a struggle! I'm a multifaceted person so, after a few years I choose neither one thing nor the other! I decided to do something that made sense to me, trying to decide who the hell I was! I understood that I could not be sure of myself, so I decided to embark on a personal adventure and try to discover who I was. (Beytlemann, conversation with the author, January 29th, 2011)[7]

The process of adaptation to the new socio-cultural context as Beytlemann described it brings into question fundamental elements of how exiled/emigré Argentine musicians constructed their identities, a topic that can be explored through the experience of another Argentine musician, Luis Naón.

Born in La Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires, Naón is a composer of electroacoustic music. He moved to Paris in order to continue the studies he had begun at the University of La Plata and ended up settling in the French capital permanently. Since 1991, Naón has been teaching in the *Département de Composition et Nouvelles Technologies du Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris.* In addition, he has been a professor at the *Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya* in Barcelona since 2006 and participates as an instructor of electroacoustics at the *Haute Ecole de Musique* in Geneva. Beyond having had a short relationship with several popular genres during his youth, Naón is an academic composer of contemporary electroacoustic music. His formative background and the aesthetics of his music, however, did not prevent emigration from mobilizing a series of doubts and questions pertaining to his personal and musical identity. "Within the French context, the question

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6 "Y en eso de la soledad, se impuso esto que yo no sabia tenia, lo que me venia a las manos era el tango…El problema era lo que venia de mi y la imagen que yo tenia de mi. Yo podría haber sostenido la imagen de lo que yo me pensaba pero había algo intrínsicamente falso e todo eso…no era lo que me venia de las tripas!"

7 "Yo estaba tan convencido que yo era eso [compositor clásico contemporáneo] y no otra cosa… Fue una lucha, Como soy un tipo por naturaleza polivalente, al cabo de unos años opte por un camino que no era una cosa ni la otra! Decidí hacer un trabajo que tuviera sentido para mi – tratar de decidir quien mierda era yo! Entendí que yo no podía estar seguro de mi, con lo cual decidí emprender una aventura personal y tratar de descubrir quien era yo."

[who am I?] comes up," Naón noted duing our first converation.[8] As he later explained to me, "in those pieces not conceived as related to tango, the incorporation of elements that can be tied to tango was not conscious." But, he noted, there was a time that promoted "a conscious decision to play the most characteristic elements of our culture, tango..." (Naón, conversation with the author, March 15, 2011).[9]

In his "Helplessness Tango" (1987; listen to track 62 on the CD), Naón addresses the violence of the military dictatorship that crippled a whole generation of Argentines. In my conversation with him, he explained that in the piece, the violence in their memories makes the musicians do unusual things: talking, playing, and making noises. In the piece, tango references act as geographical pointers; the Spanish-speaking voices that we hear from the onset of the piece belong to Buenos Aires (their accent and pronunciation of certain letters is unmistakably porteño). But the largely French-speaking audience will likely miss this cue. Beyond situating the listener geographically, the references to tango weave the emotional core of the piece. The voices we hear in "Helplessness Tango" talk about a brother that is no longer there, that has been taken away, an unavoidable reference to his disappearance in the hands of the military. Naón did not attempt to compose a tango. The work is a piece of experimental electroacoustic music, defined by the intellectual intricacies of the sonic textures characteristic of the practice in the 1970s. Melodic and sonic references to the Argentine genre are used to situate what is being said by the voices and to contextualize the emotive weight of the message.

The emotional connection is fundamental in order to understand the relationship these artists established with tango. I'm not referring to the sort of sentimentality with a certain melancholic affliction commonly associated with traditional tango, but the sort of expressive power that enables a particular expression to inspire artists beyond the purely music-creative level and allows them to engage emotionally with the music and, through it, communicate those sentiments to the audience. It was not until he found himself in Paris that Osvaldo Calo realized that he could establish that kind of relationship with tango. According to him, before his exile, "[tango] touched me a little but it was not my music" (Calo, conversation with the author, April 22, 2011).[10]

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[8] "Dentro del contexto Frances, la pregunta surge."

9 "En aquellas piezas no pensadas en referencia al tango, la incorporación de aquellos elementos que se pueden relacionar con el tango no fue consciente…una decisión consciente de jugar con los elementos mas característicos de nuestra cultura, el tango."

[10] "[el tango] me tocaba un poco pero al mismo tiempo no era mi música."

It was through the process of discovering elements he did not consider part of the genre until that time that he began to discover a connection that transcended simply appreciating the music. "I knew the tango we discussed, the cheesy one, but not this refined one [in reference to the work of the Salgán/De Lio duo].[11] I knew "*A Fuego Lento*" [one of Horacio Salgán's most popular compositions], Salgán's orchestra, but that work, performed in such a way… *that happiness*" (emphasis is mine; idem.).[12] The "happiness" that Calo heard in the novel sounds of the Salgán/De Lio duo offered a new way of approaching and entering tango. There was much to be discovered beyond those "cheesy" tangos, a world that Calo began to explore and gradually connect with. "At first I did not understand De Caro [Julio], I did not understand the musical structure [of traditional tango]. The musical analysis was beyond me, now it seems simple, well "simple ... it's weird, it seemed like I was listening to music from China" (idem.).[13] During an initial three-hour-long conversation and a subsequent meeting at his house, Calo described, with various levels of detail, his relationship with the many tango projects he had been involved with in the past decades. He accompanied tango singers, played in duos, trios, quintets, and large orchestras; the aesthetic approaches of these ensembles varied as much as their composition. Tango, however, always seemed to mobilize emotions no other musics seemed able to.

Tomas Gubitsch was another musician affected by Savigliano's so-called "tango syndrome." The experience he shared with me during our numerous conversations resonated with what Gustavo Beytelmann had described. In Gubitsch's case, however, the need to connect with tango did not surface until a few years after his departure from his native Buenos Aires and the subsequent adaptation to the new French context. While it is technically while playing with *Tiempo Argentino* that Gubitsch began his relationship with tango after his decision to stay in Paris, the aesthetics of the group does not allow us to speak of a dialogue with the tango tradition per se. As noted before, tango did not have a substantial presence in the aesthetics of the ensemble. Something similar can be said about the music of the subsequent duo Gubitsch formed with Osvaldo Calo and, later trio, after the addition of bassist Jean Paul Celea. It was not until the late 1990s that Gubitsch felt the need to engage with tango. In 1991, after several years of hard work trying to establish his music, efforts that, according to his long-time friend and colleague, Osvaldo Calo, "yielded little fruit, insignificant

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[11] The duo perfromed at Paris' s Trottoirs de Buenos Aires in 1988.

[12] "Yo conocía que el tango que te comente, el tango cursi, pero no ese tango refinado... Conocía A Fuego Lento, la orquesta de Salgan, pero ese trabajo, tocado asi… esa felicidad."

[13] "Al principio a De Caro no lo entendía, no entendía la estructura musical. Me escapaba el análisis musical, ahora me parece simple, va simple… es raro, parecía como si estuviera escuchando música de China."

to his [Gubitsch's] expectations..." (Calo, conversation with the author, April 22, 2011),[14] Tomas abandoned all his personal projects, stopped playing the guitar, and distanced himself from any Argentine traditions. During the following years, Gubitsch devoted himself almost exclusively to commissioned artistic but mostly commercial projects. All through this period he immersed himself fully in the local context. Interestingly, his music seemed to be the only medium that could channel his Argentinean-ness—in his spoken French and gestures one could not find trases of Gubitsch's non-French past. It was in the early 1990s that he found the need to begin a dialogue with a genre that, as he himself said, in general, he did not like. In the liner notes of *5*, the first album he recorded after his return to the guitar and tango, he questioned the consciousness of the decision to "choose" tango. Paraphrasing his description, tango left him no choice. It took Gustavo Beytelmann some time to reconcile himself with the music that was coming to him. Similarly, it took Gubitsch a considerable while to come to grips with the fact that he needed to begin conversing with tango, even if the conversation was to take place on his own terms.

For Beytelmann, Naón, Gubitsch, and Calo the adaptation to the new environment was not viewed as a possibility but as a necessary process, a perception shared by other musicians who emigrated in later years. Beyond their honest interest in the personal and artistic possibilities associated with the processes of interaction and integration, it was necessary to survive. Developing the network of connections required to secure a livelihood within the Parisian musical context hinged on connections outside the Argentine community, especially at a time when there was not an established community of expatriate artists within which to find possible support. The gradual integration into the French context was not easy: a new language, a more diverse demographic context, different codes of socialization, etc. Naon's "who am I?" reveals the depth of the questions prompted by a new reality. But while these processes of personal and artistic rediscovery were marked by a willingness to integrate, it did not imply the abandonment of those elements that defined who they were. As Beytelmann explained, the aim was to reconcile the many elements that shape their personae in the new context.

For some of the Argentine musicians who immigrated to France recently, the situation was different. Those who arrived in Paris found an established community of Argentine tango and non-tango musicians that, in many cases, greatly facilitated their transition. The ability to network with other Argentines, musicians or not, however, did not prevent questions pertaining to identity from

[14] "…rindieron pocos frutos, insignificante para sus expectativas…"

arising. What changed, at least in certain cases, was the manner in which these questions were processed. Paradoxically, the presence of a community that in many cases facilitated a gradual integration, allowed for a certain cultural isolation in others. This is the case of a bandoneon player whose name will remain unmentioned. During a conversation, the bandoneon player described his experience since he moved to Paris in 2007 as divided into four stages. The first stage was one of fascination with the city he had long wanted to see. The second stage was defined by the feeling of being "a foreigner and entertaining the possibility to adapt to the environment…to change my ways… my musical and social ways. The third stage began when I decided that no, I would not change my way of being because I had no work here…" (conversation with the author, December 18, 2011.)[15] He defined the fourth stage of his Parisian sojourn as one in which he had to "open his own kiosk" (*poner su kiosco propio*). In Buenos Aires, this phrase expresses the desire to avoid intermediaries when it comes to work-related opportunities, similar to the idea of setting up your own practice. Due to his decision to maintain a stance that distanced him from other members of the musical community, he had to create his own opportunities.

The position adopted by the above-mentioned bandoneon player was not common among the musicians I interviewed. He had no qualms admitting that he had no desire or need to communicate outside a selected group of musicians, mostly Argentines, that he respected and he felt respected him. Oddly enough, it seems possible to link elements of this self-imposed seclusion to aspects of his musical output. His music is the product of two clear influences, tango and late twentieth-century contemporary concert music; the voices of these two interlocutors are easily recognizable in the music. From the listener's perspective, however, the two traditions don't seem to be communicating through their exchange. The feeling is one of two voices, speaking recognizably different languages, engaged in an alternation of phrases unintelligible to the other.

In other cases, the current multicultural reality of the French context allowed for unexpected encounters. When Gerardo Jerez Le Cam arrived in Nantes in August 1992, he was alone. He had decided to leave Buenos Aires a few months before his family in order to establish himself and make the necessary arrangements needed to facilitate their future transition. A month after his arrival Le Cam was already working as a music professor at a local conservatory when he met Romanian violinist Iacob Maciuca. "By chance I ended hanging out with musicians from the East" was how Le

[15] "La segunda etapa fue la de sentirme extranjero y plantearme la posibilidad de adaptarme al medio… de cambiar mis formas…musicales y sociales. La tercera etapa fue la decidir que no, que yo no iba a cambiar mi forma de ser por que yo no tenia laburo acá."

Cam initially remembered the situation (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[16] When I asked if he really thought the encounter had been purely coincidental, he reconsider and noted that he was not sure, "there are numerous things you carry with you that take you closer to certain things" (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[17] The comment is certainly suggestive. Le Cam lives in a region that in the last decades has seen a growth in immigration that doubles that of the other French regions. Most of these immigrant—four in ten according to *Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques* (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies)—are African. In a highly diverse demographic context, Le Cam ended up immersed in one of the less represented communities—people from other E.U. countries like Roumany make less than 10% of the overall immigrant population in the Pays de la Loire region. Coincidentally or not, there are numerous similarities between the music traditions of the Southeastern European immigrants Gerardo Le Cam ended up interacting with and tango, particularly when dealing with phrasing and articulation.

Le Cam and Maciuca started two parallel work projects: a tango quartet to explore the music of Piazzolla, and a trio focused on the performance of Romanian folklore. At the same time, Le Cam also started playing piano in the house band of a local Russian cabaret. He has said, "it was there where I learned all that [Eastern European] music" (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[18] Over time, Le Cam began to write for the quartet and the two projects he started with Maciuca became one. In Buenos Aires Le Cam had worked as a composer, writing mostly what he described as chamber music and music for theatre. "Here [France]," he stated, "my main objective was to develop a personal style..." (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[19] Le Cam described his relationship with traditional tango as a very passionate one, saying, "it gives me enormous pleasure to play it" (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[20] However, he would not call what he does tango. In his words, "it is simply a language that captures part of my personality."[21] Like many of his colleagues, Le Cam is not interested in labels, his creative process is fuelled by his firm belief in the need to "erase the boundaries between the popular and

[16] "El azar me hizo juntarme con músicos de países del este."
[17] "Que se yo… hay muchas cosas que uno lleva adentro, que te llevan a tener concomitancias con ciertas cosas."
[18] "Ahí fue donde aprendí toda esa música."
[19] "Acá mi objetivo principal fue desarrollar un estilo personal."
[20] "Me genera un inmenso placer tocarlo."
[21] "Yo creo logre el principio de un lenguaje en el cual puedo plasmar una parte de mi personalidad."

classical" divide (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[22] Interestingly, it is this conviction governing his compositional approach that sheds some light on the particularities of his relationship with tango. After acknowledging the difficulties in the attempt to define categories such as popular music, Le Cam addressed the issue. In his words, "what I mean by popular is…it's what you learn in the neighbourhood, in the village, between the houses" (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[23] For Le Cam, the defining characteristic is not in the music, its consumption, medium of dissemination, or class issues. For Le Cam, like many among the recent generations of Argentine musicians living abroad and in Argentina, the popular in popular music is determined by the music being in some way connected to a specific social context. Often the references used by musicians point to the working class roots Le Cam described. Later in the interview, he told me that he came from "*ciudad Evita*[24]… middle working class—streets, school, family,"[25] a context and circumstances he considered fundamental in his musical formation; "it is due to all that, that I do this," he concluded (Le Cam, conversation with the author, January 11, 2011).[26]

Tango - banner of porteñoness in Argentina and Argentinean-ness abroad

In the nomination of tango as one of UNESCO's Humanity Intangible Cultural Heritages, the genre is described as a tradition that "expresses a way of conceiving the world and life and it nourishes the cultural imagery of the inhabitants of the capital cities of the River Plate."[27] Furthermore, in an article examining the rationale behind tango's inclusion on the UNESCO list and its implications, Frédéric Vacheron, a specialist in cultural programs working for the UN states that tango was recognized as a "primary manifestation of identity for the habitants of the region of the

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[22] "…borrar los limites que existed entre lo popular y lo clasico."
[23] "Lo que entiendo por música popular es la música que… es difícil de definir, es lo que se aprende en el barrio, en el pueblo, entre las casas."
[24] *Ciudad Evita* is a city in *La Matanza* district, within the Greater Buenos Aires metro area. It is situated 20 kilometers from downtown Buenos Aires. The city owes its name to the Eva Perón Foundation, which developed the initial settlement. Established in 1947 by Argentine President Juan Perón, his Decree No. 33221 stipulated that this new suburb of Buenos Aires be named after the namesake of the foundation, his wife Eva ('Evita') Duarte de Perón.
[25] Yo vengo de Ciudad Evita… clase media obrera—calle, escuela, familia. Eso para mi es fundamental en mi formación musical.
[26] "Es por eso que hago esto."
[27] http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/es/RL/00258. Tango appears on the 2009 UNESCO Representative List of Humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage.

River Plate" (Vacheron 2011, 34).[28] Given the status of the granting institution (i.e., the UN) and the various implications of this recognition (i.e., promotion and tango related tourism, opportunities for local tango institutions and ensembles, funding for projects of archival research and conservation, etc.), tango's inclusion on UNESCO's list sparked renewed conversations around the role of tango in the creation and articulation of a porteño/Argentine identity within and outside Argentina.[29] While a renewed focus of interest, the awareness of the genre's role in the construction and articulation of multiple identities is certainly not new. Although it's been only in the last few decades that the phenomenon began to be examined from various scholarly perspectives (Archetti 1999; Carretero 1995; García Brunelli, Lencina, and Ricardo Salton 2009, 2010; Garramuño 2007; Luker 2007; Mina 2007; Sebastián 2006; Viladrich 2005, 2006), in one way or another, the issue has been part of tango's history since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The concerns tango musicians like Juan Pacho Maglio or Manuel Campoamor presented in reference to the changes tango underwent during the first decades of the twentieth century point to initial conflicts tied to issues of identity. Complaints about changes in the nature of the genre reveal an interest for maintaining what was regarded as a consolidated practice with the power to represent those involved. None of these musicians spoke of tango in terms of an expression enabling the creation or articulation of various identities. At the same time, their critiques to the changes taking place and their voiced concerns about an apparent loss of a so-called "essence" of the genre point to a conscious awareness of the important role the tradition played in shaping the perceptions these musicians had of themselves as individuals and artists and also of their surrounding reality. If not, the changes in the music would have doubtfully sparked such spirited criticisms.

With the increasing popularity of tango across the social strata of the rapidly urbanized Buenos Aires, the genre became a vehicle for the construction and performance of a wider range of identities. In addition, the success of tango in Europe had a profound influence on the genre's representative power at home. Paraphrasing Timothy Rice, music helps us to construct a social identity by providing a sonic sign of difference from others (Rice 2014, 72). After its European success, tango began to represent "the consecration of a nation, because, for Europe, it is in fact

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[28] "Se reconoce al genero como una manifestación de identidad primordial para los habitantes del la región del Río de la Plata."

[29] The meaning and implications of the recognition of tango as one of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritages was examined in a series of conferences organized in 2010 by the *Centro 'feca – Foro y Estudios Culturales Argentinos*. The presentations were compiled and published in 2011 in a collection titled *Escritos Sobre Tango-Volumen 2: Cultura Rioplatense, Patrimonio de la Humanidad.*

Argentine tango" (Novati and Cuello 1980, 36).[30] Along with the changes that were altering the face of the genre for many porteños that previously dismissed the genre, its success in cities that the Argentine bourgeoisie revered as cultural (i.e., Paris, Berlin) and financial (i.e., London) models cemented a sense of pride that furthered the perception of tango as representative of Buenos Aires and Argentina.

Buenos Aires and Porteñoness

Tango is intrinsically linked to the ethos of Buenos Aires. According to American novelist Waldo Frank,

> the entire city of Buenos Aires beats tango. You have to go there to feel it, in the same way you have to approach a body to feel its heartbeat. It is not located anywhere. It is so typically personal as the body of the woman who dances it. (Frank 1959, 35)

Tango historian Carlos Mina described the situation invoking the image of a "symbolic machine" whose proper functioning depends on imaginary references to a geography, "and tango would be what materializes that framework" (Mina 2007, 49). Mina's comment is part of a work focused on the significance of tango during the first half of the twentieth century. Tango, however, continued to be a music intrinsically tied to Buenos Aires despite the subsequent changes in the physical, demographic, and sociopolitical landscape of the city. Even after tango's golden era period where the popularity of the genre plummeted, its sounds remained the sonic signifier of the city. It was certainly a different kind of tango, but no other music seemed able to depict the misfortunes and joys of the capital better than tango. The discourse and rebellious attitude of rock and the defiant tone of the poetry of *la nueva canción* provided what a generation that grew up censored and threatened needed to shape their individual and communal identities, something the tango, a genre trapped in the anachronism of its lyrics and its aesthetic of exclusion, could not do. Interestingly, the captivating pulsation of Buenos Aires remained tied to the breathing of the bandoneon, this time, however, Astor Piazzolla's.

During an interview, pianist Gerado Gandini told Chilean journalist Rodrigo Torres that, "if an Argentine film director wants to make a documentary about Buenos Aires, what opens that

[30] "Representa, además, la consagración de un país, porque, para Europa, se trata del tango Argentino."

documentary? I'm sure that the music of Piazzolla" (*A pulso*, October 1989.)[31] According to Carlos Kuri, Piazzolla's style "is enviably denotative of Buenos Aires" (Kuri 1997, 89.)[32] In an article published in 2006, musicologist Omar Corrado noted that, " It is not common for a music to possess the referential capacity to symbolically build a city, to condense the relevant traits the public attributes to it" (Corrado 2006, 4).[33] In the article, however, the author set himself to test his admonition. Focused on the music of Astor Piazzolla, Corrado examines *las aptitudes referenciales del tango* (tango's referential aptitudes): the bandoneon, the rhythmic design of the old milonga, the formal structure of Piazzolla's compositions, the gestural force of the other instruments playing in Piazzolla's ensembles, the lyricism of the composer's slow themes, the characteristic descending bass lines, the typical "breathing" of the genre, etc. In the article, Corrado uses the words of Piazzolla himself, "if my music had any tango at all is not my concern. What I can assure you is that it has plenty from Buenos Aires, today's Buenos Aires," (Corrado 2006, 5).

The referential power of music to a place has been a highly debated topic, arousing many controversies that cannot be address here. Martin Strokes writes that music "evokes and organizes collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity" (Stokes 1994, 3). The collective perceptions that music allows people to establish with a particular place are what is important to keep in mind here. And many Argentines would agree with Florencio Escardó when, in his *Geografía de Buenos Aires* concludes that, "tango is the city's folkloric song as it expresses, in involuntary but significant fashion, something deep, transcendental, and permanent about the soul of the city itself" (quoted in Sábato 2005, 37).[34]

For most Argentines, tango speaks of Buenos Aires; the music mobilizes memories and experiences linked to the city and its ethos. In their interactions with tango, however, the musicians at the centre of this dissertation have gone beyond tapping into pre-existing associations. In "Relocating the Tatras: Place and Music in Górale Identity and Imagination," Louise Wrazen asks, "how is it possible to be *of* a place when no longer *in* the place" (emphasis in original; Wrazen 2007, 185). In her article, the question serves as the starting point for an exploration of the close

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[31] "Si un cineasta argentino quiere hacer un documental sobre Buenos Aires, ¿con qué se inicia ese documental?. Estoy seguro que con la música de Piazzolla."
[32] "[e]l estilo de Piazzolla es envidiablemente denotativo de Buenos Aires."
[33] "No es frecuente que una música posea la capacidad referencial para construir simbólicamente una ciudad, para condensar los rasgos pertinentes que los públicos le atribuyen."
[34] "El tango es la canción folklórica de la ciudad en cuanto expresa, de una manera involuntaria pero bien significativa, algo profundo, transcendental y permanente del alma de la ciudad misma."

relationships between music, place, and identity. In this context, Wrazen's question offers a good way to emphasize the role tango has played in the creation of an imaginary place that has allowed musicians to remain part *of* a place without being *in* it.

In reference to Gustavo Beytelmann's *tango imaginario* (imaginary tango)—name Beytelmann himself gave to the tangos he "found" during his exile—, Esteban Buch writes:

> And what makes it "imaginary" it is not the fact that it took shape when many thought that real tango no longer existed. It is also a consequence of being the result of an absence, that of the home country, which, if it is true that "the ailment of exile is the loss of an outside," must be dealt in a way that allows the lost physical site to become a psychological place. (Buch 2012, 148)[35]

It is through their novel tangos that artistst like Beytelmann, Mosalini, Gubitsch and many others have given shape to the imaginary recreations of the place left behind. In the liner notes of Tomas Gubitsch's recent album, *Ítaca*, the composer writes:

> If I had to define the style of the pieces that make *Ítaca*, I would say that we have tried a "mi-tango," an intimate tango, the music of my imaginary city. It is a city that I come from and that, *in fine*, I always come back; a city that I have in me and I'm inventing and forging. (emphasis in original; Gubitsch 2012)[36]

Tango is an essential part of the identity of many of the people of Buenos Aires. Even young people recognize in its expressions something that allows the externalization of elements that define their artistic and individual personalities. Some also argue that in the sounds of tango we can recognize the perpetual dramas of Buenos Aires. In addition, following the observations of Marcelo Alejandro Drago, tango also seems to carry the essence of the language in its inhabitants. In his DMA dissertation, Drago argues that, "in order to understand the original yet standardized ways in which tango musicians read (and depart from) the printed music, one has to be familiarized with the particularities of the spoken accent of the locals" (Drago 2008, 50). Drago's stance sounds too close to a refurbished version of the old "you have to be Argentine to play tango." Although appealing

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[35] "Y lo que lo vuelve "imaginario" no es solo el haberse constituido cuando muchos pensaban que el tango real ya no existía. Es también el ser producto de una ausencia, la del país natal, que, si es verdad que "la enfermedad del exilio es la perdida del afuera," debe ser elaborada de un modo que le permita al sitio físico perdido transformarse en un *lugar* psíquico."

[36] "Si tuviese que definir el estilo de las piezas que constituyen Ítaca, diría que se trata de un "mi-tango," un tango intimo, la música de mi ciudad imaginaria. Es una ciudad de la que vengo y a la que, *in fine*, siempre vuelvo; una ciudad que llevo en mi y que voy inventando y forjando."

from a romantic perspective, the argument is rapidly invalidated by the realities of tango outside Argentina. If familiarity with the idiosyncrasies of porteño's Spanish is required to properly articulate a tango melody or its accompaniment, how can we explain the growing number of sensitive non-Argentine musicians playing tango in Europe and other international locales outside the River Plate; many of them have never set foot in Buenos Aires and can already play at levels that many young Argentine tango musicians would envy. I'm not denying the numerous benefits non-porteños playing tango would get from visiting Buenos Aires, living the hyperkinetic pace of the city and experiencing the idiosyncrasies of its inhabitants and their speech. At the same time, however, I don't consider that understanding the accent of porteños is the door to comprehending or adequately playing the accentual patterns of tango

Bandoneon player Arturo Penón[37] has also underlined a certain correlation between the way in which melodies are articulated in tango and the speech patterns of porteños. According to Penón, "the proximity between the sound of the bandoneon and human speech explains why that instrument has become the principal voice in tango" (Penón 1986, 24).[38] Penón supports his argument with a short analysis of Pedro Laurentz's interpretations of the melody of *De Puro Guapo*. "It is impossible to listen to that interpretation without feeling that the bandoneon seems to reproduce, with its phrase in the second part, the discourse of some porteño" (idem.)[39] I have heard the segment numerous times and have not yet heard the correlation suggested by Penón. At the same time, it is almost impossible for someone from Buenos Aires to listen to the phrasing of an old school *tanguero* like Penón and not feel wreathed by the sounds of the city and those who live in it.

These are some of the most common connections often established between tango, Buenos Aires, and its people. Evidently, the genre does not play a significant role in the life of all porteños. This is particularly true nowadays since in recent years Buenos Aires has been welcoming increasing numbers of immigrants from many corners of the world, especially people from South American nations undergoing economic strains far harsher than Argentina's (Figure 7). Tango does not "speak" to these new porteño's and their sociocultural reality just like it did not "speak" to those internal immigrants from the northern provinces that flooded the capital in the 1950s and 1960s.

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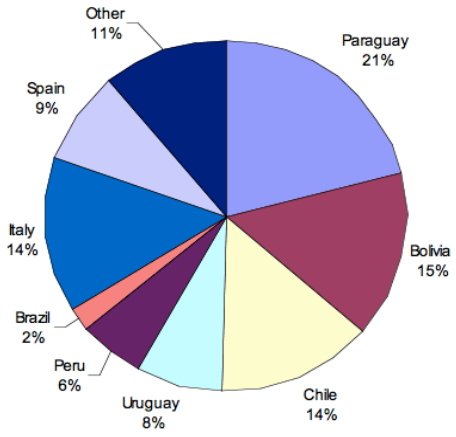
37 Arturo Penón (January 31st 1927-January 10th 2000) was a famous bandoneonist, composer, and arranger. He spent twenty-four years along with Osvaldo Pugliese in his historical orchestra.

38 "La proximidad entre el sonido del bandoneon y el hable explica que en aquel se haya convertido en voz principal del tango."

39 "Es imposible escuchar esa ejecución sin sentir que el bandoneon parece reproducir, con su frase de la segunda parte, el discurso de algún porteño."

There are also many individuals that despite having been born and raised in Buenos Aires do not have a particular rapport with tango. The genre, however, is all around them and their daily lives, even if they don't dance it or go seeking it every night in the numerous clubs currently devoted to the genre.

Figure 7.1 Foreign-born population according to data obtained by the Argentine Institute of Statistics and Censuses in 2001.[40]



The genre is still an intrinsic part of the city and its people. For someone who has never been in Buenos Aires, this relationship is sometimes very difficult to understand. It is even more difficult to describe. After looking at a seven-storey mural of Carlos Gardel that dominates one of Buenos Aires' most important avenues, *La Avenida Libertador*, Robert Farris Thompson sketched this description:

> The smile of Gardel is a challenge: if you want to understand me, master the message of my city. Not just its song but its streets, not just its music but its dance, not just its dance but its diamond-patterned dance floors, and the red-diamond tablecloths that mirror those patterns, while supporting our creole cuisine: *asado*, *matambre*, *empanadas*, *locro*, *humitas*, *pastelitos*, *alfajores*. Our food and our dance, our literature and our music, our Jorge Luis Borges and Eladia Blazquez, from one single challenge: you don't reach ten million without a big dream. And what is that dream tango. Find out. (Thompson 2005, xiv)

[40] According to the INDEC (National Institute of Statistics and Censuces), the chart was based on an surveyed population of 1.531.940 foreign-born individuals.

Asking a porteño to define tango often awakens overused expressions like Ernesto Santos Discépolo's "tango is a sad thought that is danced."[41] On most occasions, however, answers will make the questioner regret having posed the question in the first place, especially if the individual answering is personally involved with the genre in some way or form. While talking about the issue in his Paris apartment, young bandoneon player Matías Gonzales offered the following reflection: "tango is Ruben [Juarez][42] taking a siesta…when he was fat…asking to stop the tour bus in the middle of the road in order to take a ten-minute siesta under a tree, that's tango" (Gonzalez, conversation with the author, December 18, 2011).[43] Gonzalez was not trying to be deliberately lyrical in his response. It is not uncommon for people having strong connections with tango to talk about the alleged essence of the genre in terms of someone's actions or personality. Tango as "a way of living" (Mina 2007), particularly the way of life of porteños.

In an essay published in 2006, philosopher and ex-vice-president of Argentina's National Tango Academy, Ana Sebastián, wrote that "for a long time tango was a catalyst in which almost all elements of porteño identity were synthesized through the texts that accompany the music, the titles, the poetry, the theatre and the prose" (Sebastián 2006, 31).[44] Tango played a fundamental role in the working out of various identity issues decades before the period suggested by Sebastian. In a previous publication, I underlined the idea that early tango was a tradition that through the conjoint evolution of its fundamental expressions (i.e., dance, music, poetry) provided an "in-between" or "third space" (Bhabha 1994) for the negotiation of multiple struggles to structure racial, sexual, and class identities in the River Plate in the second half of the nineteenth century (Munarriz 2011). Marta Savilgiano has a similar perception: "…when one focuses on tango's "origins" and "evolution," she writes, "I have chosen to join those who emphasize hybridization at the origins, and among those, the ones who, far from portraying easy blends or give-and-take, point to a kind of hybridization that retains the conflicts and tensions involved in the process—sexualized class, race, and gender conflicts, where global politics have had a definite impact on the local configurations" (Savigliano 1995, 37). It is important to note that these early conflicts took place at a time when there was no

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[41] "El tango es un pensamiento triste que se baila."
[42] Rubén Juárez (November 5th, 1947 – May 31st, 2010) was an incredibly charismatic bandoneon player from Argentina. He was also a songwriter and a singer (he usually sang accompanying himself on bandoneon).
[43] "El tango es Rubén, tomando una siesta… cuando estaba gordo. parando la combi en la mitad de la ruta, pidiendo frenar la combi para tomarse una siesta de diez minutos, eso es tango!"
[44] "A catalizador en el que se sintetizaron casi todos los elementos de la identidad porteña por medio de los textos que acompañan la music, los títulos, la poesía, el teatro y la prosa."

glimpse of a shared sense of national identity on the horizon; the identity issues that were being worked out through the performance practices associated with tango were taking place in a country that was coming out of a long period of bloody internal wars. In the words of historian Félix Luna,

> to put it in graphic terms: if an typical argentine, who in 1880 or 1879 was twenty years old, had taken a look over his country, he would have seen a very promising project, with interesting natural resources, but lacking a capital and a National State; a country where a third of the territory was occupied by the Indians, and that had no currency of its own or presence in world trade. That is, a country that at some point could work well, but for the time being, had many steps to go. (Luna 1993, 127)[45]

Luna's description centres on the fragile political and economic infrastructure of the young country, leaving other elements unconsidered, primarily the very complex social issues at play behind the numerous battles for territory and power. Some of these very same social issues were being explored through the dance, the music, and the poetry of the early tango.

In the following decades, Buenos Aires will undergo a process of mesmerizing modernization and tango will adapt to the increasingly complex realities of the city. At the same time, the actors and scenarios associated with tango's early stages will remain crucial in the processes of identity creation tied to the genre. John William Cooke was right when he described tango as an expression characteristic of a world found in between the countryside and the city, a place where some forms of that which is Argentine are kept alive (quoted in Varela 2005, 167). Tango will subsequently continue to move closer and closer to the city but those elements of Argentinean-ness found in the urban/rural interstices mentioned by Cooke will continue to feed the genre's mythology and the ideas of individual and regional identity associated with it: the bravery of *criollo* and his urban counterpart, *el compadrito*; the solitary nature of these figures; their unflinching honesty and their respect for their surroundings (i.e., the plains, *el barrio*), values seemingly irreconcilable with those associated with urbanization and modernism.

It was also during this period of rapid change that we see marked changes in the music and an equally striking shift towards a different narrative in tango lyrics. According to Roberto Martinez

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[45] "Para decirlo en términos gráficos: si un argentino medio, que en 1880 o en 1879 tuviese veinte años de edad, hubiera echado una Mirada sobre su país, habría visto un proyecto bastante promisorio, dotado de recursos naturales interesantes, pero que carecía de una capital y de un Estado nacional; un país donde la tercera parte del territorio estaba ocupada por los indios y que no tenia moneda propia ni presencia en el comercio mundial. Es decir, que alguna ve podía funcionar bien, pero que por el momento tenia muchos etapas por recorrer."

and Alejandro Molinari, since tango lyrics began to have a narrative argument, they began to expose the worldview of the men of the River Plate region (Martinez and Molinari 2012, 155). Tango was not only a dance and music embraced as representative of a community, a region, and a culture, it was also a medium that seemed to adequately describe the perplexingly complex web of human realities woven throughout the increasingly urbanized city. The description presented by Argentine physician and writer, Florencio Escardó, emphasizes this important point:

> Tango is the folksong of the city as it expressed, in involuntary but significant manner, something profound, transcendental and everlasting in the soul of the city itself ... The tango—the true tango to which we allude—is a song without possibility of expressive irradiation, without magnetic influence on the crowd, but effective on the individual; it is an introvert song. As soon as it sounds, the porteño goes with the song to the bosom of his own isolation, he retreats to the accentuation of his loneliness, he is left with the confidence of his abysmal sentimentality, it would be very difficult for him to explain what he feels, but there is no doubt that he would understand himself much better when he is taken by a tango. (quoted in Sabato 2005, 37) [46]

Much is packed in these few words. The author's allusion to a "true tango" imply that only *the* tango (never clearly specified) carries the communicative power he so colourfully described. What is more relevant here, however, is Escardó's underlining of tango's unique ability to express some of the idiosyncrasies of the people of the River Plate region. Again, suddenly, tango was much more than a characteristic dance and a particular music; it was a unique cultural tradition able to capture and express the vicissitudes and complexities of the lives of porteños and, according to most, Argentines. "Tango's substance is in its ability to express the sentiments of the porteño and, by extension, of the argentinean," wrote José Gobello (1980, 245).[47] If one can extend the representative power of tango from Buenos Aires or the central region of Argentina to the whole country, as Gobello argues, it is something that needs to be carefully examined. Argentina has always been a highly centralized country;[48] the capital has been the political, economic, and cultural dynamo

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[46] "El tango es la canción folklórica de la ciudad en cuanto expresa, de una manera involuntaria pero bien significativa, algo profundo, transcendental y permanente del alma de la ciudad misma… El tango—el verdadero tango al que aludimos—es una canción sin posibilidad de irradiación expresiva, sin acción magnética sobre la muchedumbre, pero si sobre el individuo, es una canción introvertida. Apenas suena, el porteño se va con ella al seno de su propio aislamiento, a la acentuación de su soledad, se queda en confidencia con su sentimentalidad abisal; le seria muy difícil explicar lo que siente, pero no duda de que el se entiende mejor cuando se le adentra un tango."

[47] "La sustancia del tango es la aptitud para expresar los sentimientos del porteño y, por extensión, del argentino."

[48] It is not a coincidence that the province of Buenos Aires currently holds 38.9 per cent of the country's population—15.625.084 of the total 40.117.096 according to the Argentinean Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC).

of the country since Buenos Aires was finally recognized as the nation's capital in 1880. Thus, historically what has transpired in Buenos Aires has often been assumed to carry countrywide validity. This situation is crucial to understanding some of the vehement critiques that flourished around "non-traditional" tango expressions, but also fundamental in any attempt to understand the ties many Argentines have a continue to establish with tango.

The two decades that follow the end of tango's golden era (1960 to 1980) were marked by a sizable gap between the genre and the realities of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires. By the end of the 1950s, most traditional tango expressions found themselves stuck in the regurgitation of a series of aesthetic models that failed to accommodate the rapidly changing realities of the context and the new generations.[49] It was in local rock, the *nueva canción* movement, and folklore where the majority of the city youth found the space and tools to express their identity. Tango continued to represent Argentina abroad, but even its presence in the international scenario decreased considerably.

In Argentina, the situation began to change in the mid-1990s with a striking rekindling of the interest young Argentines had for tango.[50] In December of 2008, during a short trip to Buenos Aires, I met with pianist Julian Peralta and asked him about what prompted the need to go back to tango. "There was a imperative necessity to break with the prevailing scheme of reconstructing foreign forms…we were all playing rock and jazz and suddenly, hey wait… listen to this [in reference to a recording of Anibal Troilo]…this is awesome" (Peralta, conversation with the author, 19 December, 2008).[51] One of Peralta's colleagues, the flutist Paulina Fain, recalled: I did not go to *la escuela* [short for Escuela de Musica Popular de Avellaeda-Avellaneda's Popular Music School] to play tango; I went to play jazz… and I played it, all good! But along with jazz, I had to study folklore and tango, they were mandatory courses…what happened was that I had to play that music and it moved me… besides, I did not have any negative associations with them" (Fain, conversation with

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[49] On September 16, 1955 a military and civilian uprising ended the second presidency of Juan Perón. The popularly known *Revolución Libertadora* (Liberating Revolution) initiated a period of military interventions and short-lived democratic governments that marked the civic life of the country for the following three decades.

[50] On the international stage, tango's situation began to improve in the 1980s as a result of the success of a series of tango shows, especially *Tango Argentino*.

[51] "Había una necesidad imperiosa de frenar con el esquema imperante de reconstruir formas extranjeros ...todos estábamos tocando rock y el jazz, y de repente, oye ...esperamos escuchar esto [en referencia a una grabación de Aníbal Troilo] ...esto es impresionante."

the author, January 3rd, 2008).[52] In the current situation tango has once again taken a central role in the construction of multiple identities within the porteño context. As Morgan Luker points out,

> In this context, many contemporary musicians have self-consciously approached tango as a means of (re)exploring and (re)articulating a sense of Argentine identity that was radically undermined by the 2001 crisis and the political climate that contributed to it. (Luker 2007, 69)

In fact, given various shapes that tango has taken in the current scenario one could argue that through the widening of its aesthetic palette the genre has increased its capacity to serve as a vehicle for the manifestation of individual and communal identities. Given the wide range of approaches that coexist within the realm of tango in Buenos Aires and abroad nowadays, tango now participates in the construction and articulation of multiple identities that span across age groups, classes, and genders.

Argentinean-ness

In addition to the strong connection people in Buenos Aires had established with the increasingly popular genre, by 1910 tango was already perceived, at least by some Argentines, as a national emblem. Prior to the celebration of the centenary of Argentina's independence, tense arguments arose around the piece of music that should be performed in front of the numerous international dignitaries that were invited for the main parade. As Sergio Pujol explained in his recent *Cien Años de Música Argentina*, at the time there was plenty of tango around,

> but the genre that collects adherents night after night, is a morally dubious music. There is no agreement between the ruling classes on the legitimacy of this emblematic product of a country that imagines itself closer to the radiant sun of the pampas than the gloom of the tenements. (Pujol 2012, 22)[53]

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[52] "Yo no fui a la escuela a tocar tango, yo fui a tocar jazz. Y toque, que se yo, todo bien… Pero folklore y tango eran materias obligatorias de primer año en el conservatorio…A mi particularmente me paso que tuve que tocar esa música y me emociono…y no tenia ninguna referencia negativa."

[53] "El tango abunda, pero el genero que colecciona adeptos noche tras noche, es una música moralmente dudosa. No hay acuerdo entre la clase dirigente sobre su legitimidad como producto emblemático de un país que se imagino mas cerca del radiante sol de la pampa que de la penumbra de los conventillos."

After numerous discussions and failed commissions,[54] Alfredo Bevilaqua's tango "*Independencia*" was chosen.

For reasons that transcend musical concerns, in the following decades tango began to be positioned as the nation's representative expression. Technically, tango's power of representation did not extend beyond the urban areas of Buenos Aires but, at a time when, from the perspective of the ruling class, Argentina was delimited by the borders of its capital, the porteño identity was presented as carrying national significance. From the 1920s onwards, intellectuals and key cultural figures began to pay special attention to the widely popular genre. In general terms, this interest did not respond to musical, choreographic, or literary concerns. The focus was on the role and significance tango assumed in the rapidly changing reality of the city. Paraphrasing Florencia Garramuño, during the 1920s and 1930s period in which Buenos Aires experienced an intense modernization, tango begins to be presented as the music of the nation. Emphasizing aspects that were until that time perceived as primitive, Buenos Aires' intellectuals approached tango in order to create a local modernity that was noticeably different from that of Europe. Beyond what tango meant for the people involved with its various expressions across the social strata of the city, this process of "nationalization" strengthened the role of the genre in the construction of an all-embracing porteño/Argentine identity. Garramuño's argument finds support in the meticulous examination of the period produced by cultural and literary critic Beatriz Sarlo (Sarlo 2007). In her book *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (A peripheral modernity: Buenos Aires 1920 and 1930), Sarlo examines the radical changes that took place during the first decades of the twentieth century and reflects on the various effects these changes had for those across the social composition of the increasingly cosmopolitan Buenos Aires. Sarlo does not deal with tango specifically, but through her analysis we begin to understand how the multitude of technological (e.g., mechanical reproduction of music, recording, and the advent of radio), infrastructural, institutional, cultural, and social changes associated with the process of modernization that was sweeping the city helped to position tango at the centre of the capital's cultural life and subsequently, as a banner of Argentine identity.

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[54] Pujol notes that the organizers of the event had commissioned Arturo Berutti, an Argentine composer of "unquestionable Argentine flavour," with an opera but the piece was not finished on time. In addition, Pujol writes, "Camille Saint-Saëns, an authority on the subject, seems to have forgotten in the agenda of unfinished projects the hymn to the Argentine centenary that they requested from Buenos Aires" (Pujol 2012, 23). [Camile Saint- Saëns, una autoridad en la materia, parece haber olvidado en la agenda de los proyectos inconclusos el himno al centenario argentino que pidieron desde Buenos Aires].

For Argentine exiles and émigrés, tango continued to play a fundamental role in the creation of their various understandings of Argentine identity. It is important, however, to emphasize the distinction that exists between the idea of Argentinean-ness and the notion of a nation-state identity. Argentines of all walks of life often shared disparaging views on their home country. The history of Argentina has been plagued with major failures at the economical, institutional, and political levels; after the most recent debacle, in December of 2001, many Argentines were ready to "*bajar la cortina*," (bring the curtain down), a phrase of resignation a business owner would use to indicate that it's over, there is nothing else one could do. In one of the essays included in a collection devoted to the analysis of the December 2001 financial crisis, James Neilson stated that,

> For reasons that are painfully obvious, it has become popular again the notion that the Argentina is a mystery, perhaps the most indecipherable of the modern world, due to its condition of a country that has all what it takes to thrive but time and again has managed to ruin itself in dramatic fashion. (Neilson 2003, 17)[55]

Given the country's history, I do not think Borges errs when he argues that Argentines' inability to identify with the state is a result of this sequence of catastrophic administrations and the generalized perception that the state is, as he put it, a "inconceivable abstraction" (Borges 1946, 37).[56] The bottom line, Borges concluded, is that the Argentine is an individual, not a citizen (Borges 1946, 37).[57]

Borges has not been the only one that underlined the damaging consequences of an apparent socially ingrained individualism. In her contribution to the abovementioned collection, Maria Eugenia Valentié stressed that, "[Argentines] have the tendency to consider that the fault is always someone else's when things don't go well." Rarely would they see themselves as part of the problem; the popular presumption is that the country is cursed and past salvation.

> Peròn spoke of a "sinarquia," a strange association of communists, Jews and Masons that conspired against Argentina. After that, the blame was the "lefties',"

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[55] "Por motivos que son dolorosamente evidentes, se ha puesto en boga de nuevo la noción de que la Argentina constituye un misterio, acaso el mas indescifrable del mundo moderno, por ser un país que objetivamente tiene todo lo necesario para prosperar pero que una y otra vez se las ha ingeFniado para arruinarse de forma espectacular."
[56] "Ello puede atribuirse a la circunstancia de que, en este país, los gobiernos suelen ser pésimos o al hecho general de que el Estado es una inconcebible abstracción."
[57] "…lo cierto es que el argentino es un individuo, no un ciudadano."

> then the Jews, the North American [U.S. Americans], the multinational companies, the International Monetary Fund. (Valentié 2003, 31)[58]

As an Argentine citizen myself, I'm well aware of these views, I have experienced them countless times in Buenos Aires and abroad. While the comments presented above need to be taken with more than one grain of salt—in moments of need Argentines can show incommensurable solidarity—they shed some light on the enormously complicated relationship Argentines maintain with their country. It is not uncommon for an Argentine to talk about her country in the most negative and disenchanted of tones, and, in the same breath, describe with heartfelt pride the cultural legacy of the country. Alain Touraine encapsulated this difficult contradiction beautifully in a controversial article where, after praising the genral level of education and invention, he attempted to explain that "the Argentines exists, Argentina does not" (*La Nación*, October 27, 2002).[59]

There are numerous implications to the striking discordances that exist between how most Argentines relate to Argentina as a nation-state defined by its institutions and Argentina as a geographical cradle of numerous cultural traditions. When focusing on the Argentine musicians I interviewed in Europe, ramifications of this conflict can be recognized affecting the nature of the various identities they shaped through their novel expressions. Through the various relationships they have established with the tango tradition they have built imaginary bridges to a sociocultural context tied to a physical geography but, in a sense, detached from it. Their various tangos allow these Argentine artists living in Paris to activate powerful connections with specific elements of Argentine life and culture, elements that are perceived as custodians of a sort of uncorrupted Argentinean-ness having nothing to do with Argentina as a legitimate geopolitical entity and its institutions.

Writers from all walks of life, every latitude, and social standing found in tango a pretext for sociological meditation and philosophical essays (Sábato 2005). In the previous pages I have presented a few of these opinions. I have focused on those that link, in one way of another, tango to the ethos of Buenos Aires and the idiosyncrasies of its people. This wide array of significations tied to tango seems a good point to begin understanding why so many Argentines feel the need to

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[58] "Los argentinos tenemos la tendencia a considerar que a culpa la tiene n los otros cuando las cosas andan mal. Perón hablaba de la "sinarqui", una extraña asociación de comunistas, judíos y masones que conspiraba contra la Argentina. Luego se culpo a los "zurdos", a los judíos, a los norteamericanos, a las empresas multinacionales, al Fondo monetario internacional."

[59] "Los argentinos existen, la Argentina no."

establish a personal dialogue with a genre they had no personal relationship with prior to their departure from Argentina.

When flutist Paulina Fain first entered the Avellaneda conservatory, her idea was to play jazz. It was only because tango was part of the institution's curriculum that she found herself playing it. As she pointed it out, during the course of her studies she ran into tango and, when she began to play it, something seemed to click for her. The connection Fain established with tango transcended the appeal of the music; it was fundamentally emotional (Fain, conversation with the author, January 3rd, 2009). Something very similar happened to many Argentine musicians after having left their homeland. During my last visit to Buenos Aires, I met with pianist and composer Diego Schissi in order to talk about his relationship with tango. In 1989 Diego Schissi moved to the United States in order to continue his jazz studies at the University of Miami. Once there, Schissi recalled, "I began to feel, very subtly but very clearly, that the music that I was making was not what I wanted to do."[60] He knew very little about tango back then. "I only listened to Piazzolla when very young...and some sung tango."[61] While studying jazz it became really clear that he could not compose using that language. "I began to listen to tango and began to feel that I had to be part of that,"[62] Schissi explained (Schissi, conversation with the author, November 20th, 2012). It was in fact that need of being part of that music in some way or form that prompted his return to Buenos Aires in 1997. What followed this realization was a period marked by profound doubts, "a tugging war,"[63] as he put it, between the various elements that shaped who he considered himself to be from a musical perspective—a process of reconciling his multiple musical personalities not too different from the one Beytelmann or Gubitsch underwent in Paris.

The circumstances that brought Paulina Fain and Diego Schissi in contact with tango are not identical. In one case the genre was initially imposed as part of the requirements of a program and on the other the relationship resulted from a personal decision to go follow that path. Beyond this initial difference, the bond these artists forged with the genre found its footing on the chance the music offered to mobilize a series of emotions that remained unaltered by other musics. It was this same experience that prompted my decision to distance myself from jazz and engage with tango, a

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[60] "Comencé a sentir, sutilmente pero muy claramente que la música que estaba haciendo no era la música que quería hacer."
[61] "Solo conocía lo que había escuchado, Piazzolla de muy chico…tango cantado… no mucho mas.
[62] "En el medio de estar trabajando con el jazz…empecé a para la oreja con el tango y sentí claramente que tenia que formar parte de eso de alguna manera."
[63] "…fueron varios años de una tironeo muy grande."

genre I had only a distant relationship with. It was the feeling that through tango or expressions rooted in it, I could channel emotions that never fully materialized in other musical contexts. Although none of the musicians I interviewed put it in those terms, it made sense for me to think of possible analogies between our experiences.

In general terms, the "tango syndrome" is, at least in part, a consequence of a series of individuals having been brought up in a similar sociocultural context and according to similar codes of socialization. During a 2006 lecture at the City University of New York's Graduate Centre, music theorist Marion Guck noted that, "we pick a lot of our ways of thinking about and understanding music as we grow up, as we are educated…"[64] It is this fundamental observation that allowed Guck to conclude that she is "much happier with the idea of inter-subjectivity than with subjectivity…"

The idea of inter-subjectivity offers an interesting perspective to reconcile the similarities and differences that exist between the relationships artists like Beytelmann, Mosalini, Gubitsch, Calo and other musicians living in France have been establishing with tango since late 1970s. The way in which each of these artists envisioned and materialized their relationship to the genre was different, defined by their surrounding circumstances, particular motivations, understanding of tango, personal feelings, tastes, and opinions. There were, however, a series of similarities in their approaches, aspects common to all their subjectivities. The impulse to interact with the tango tradition responded to similar needs to rearticulate a sense of identity in a context in many ways foreign to them. For musicians like Beytelmann, Gubistch or Jerez LeCam, the dialogue with tango started once they left their homeland; it was their departure, in fact, that prompted the interaction. In the case of musicians like Mosalini, Marsili or Schwartz, the dialogue with tango was already taking place in Buenos Aires; in France, however, the nature of those conversations changed considerably. New voices entered the musical dialogue in the form of new traditions and non-Argentine musicians with different backgrounds and views. The meaning and implication of the genre also changed. Their expressive needs were not the same ones, nor were the expectations of the audience the same. It was through their various and malleable conceptualizations of tango that all these musicians managed to shape their artistic and personal identities in the French context.

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[64] The lecture was part of Professor Joseph Strauss' seminar in music theory. Guck's talk was originally intended to deal with issues relating to gender and the role of women in the field of music theory, however, exchanges rapidly gave way to other issues that were welcomed and discussed.

Conclusion - Tango: the perfect vehicle

> The truth is that in the first decade of the XXI century (2000-2010), the aesthetic approaches in dialogue with tango began to consolidate new views on the musical canon. Of course, it is not the first time in its history that the margins set by the conventions yield to the expectations of artistic creation; what we can say is that the production registered in this period of time has distinguishing features of its own. (Liska 2012, 11)[65]

This excerpt belongs to the preface of a recently published collection of essays devoted to the realities of tango in Argentina. As suggested by Liska, the passage could be used to describe other periods of tango activity in Argentina. In fact, it offers an adequate depiction of what took place in Buenos Aires during the 1960s, when musicians like Piazzolla, Rovira, and Salgán began to look for new paths within the genre. It also seems an appropriate way of describing the situation in the late 1990s, when a new generation of young Argentines rekindled a long-dormant relationship with tango. Liska's words also condense quite nicely some of the histories of tango outside its native homeland. In fact, they illustrate quite accurately the general experiences of most of the musicians who for political or personal reasons relocated to France since the late 1970s. Motivated by their musical interests and expressive needs, artists Gustavo Beytelmann, Juan José Mosalini, and Tomas Gubistch began a dialogue with tango that resulted in a series of novel takes on tango's traditional canon. Like those at the centre of the monograph edited by Liska, these novel expressions remain distinguished by their own characteristics.

The fact that Liska's description can be applied to multiple periods in tango's history in Argentina and abroad is worthy of note. What is perhaps even more interesting is to examine why tango keeps catching the attention of new generations of musicians from Argentina, but also from countries across the globe. Why is the once forgotten tradition associated with a reactionary mentality once again a powerful site for the construction and performance of various degrees of identity for individuals in and outside Argentina? Why have so many non-Argentines identified with the music? How is the music able to accommodate the numerous heterogeneities characteristic of the genre's new context and remain significant to Argentines? Liska's collection of essays had not

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[65] "Lo cierto es que en la primera década del siglo XXI (2000-2010) las propuestas estéticas en dialogo con el tango fueron consolidando nuevas miradas sobre el canon musical. Por supuesto, no es la primera vez en su historia que los márgenes establecidos por las convenciones ceden ante la expectativa de creación artística; lo que podemos sostener es que la producción inscripta en este segmento de época posee rasgos que le son propios."

been published when I first decided to embark on this project. What sparked my initial interest for the current realities of tango was the music of a series of Argentine exiles that had relocated to Paris and other French cities since the late 1970s. Interestingly, the questions that initially guided my research were fundamentally similar to those that sprang from reviewing the implications of Liska's description of the recent situation in Buenos Aires.

The motivation behind this work was first, to improve our understanding of the processes allowing composers to navigate tango's historical norms in order to accommodate their own musical and expressive needs, and second, to understand the values assigned to these expressions by musicians and audience members in and out of their relevant sociocultural context. In addition, through the examination of a number of issues associated with the recent institutionalization of tango pedagogies in Europe and Argentina I intended to better understand the role they have been playing in the dissemination of the genre.

Based on a Bakhtinnean approach to the analysis of the work of a Gustavo Beytelmann, Juan José Mosalini, Tomas Gubitsch and other composers currently living in Paris, this dissertation showed that what sets in place the expectations most listeners in Western Europe associate with tango is not the musical material per se. While there are idiosyncratic melodic turns, cadences, and rhythmic motives, what is most important when bringing these sonic entanglements into the realm of tango are the ways in which the score is "musicalized" by the performers according to the knowledge they have acquired through their experience with the genre and other musicians. It is primarily this practical knowledge that allows them to situate us, listeners, within the realm of tango.

In addition, through the examination of tango's key characteristics I have argued that it is as a consequence of 1) the heterogeneity that shaped tango during its developmental stages and 2) the primacy of the performance practices shaping the sounds of tango that the genre has been able to unproblematically accommodate the new heterogeneities reflecting the current realities of composers, arrangers, and musicians. The analysis has also shown that due to the primacy of these "ways of doing," composers have been able to widen their palettes of musical influences and incorporate elements seemingly incompatible with the basic structure of tango.

It is due to this balancing act between the ability to accommodate increasingly complex heterogeneities and the maintenance of a musically recognizable core that tango has been playing an increasingly important role in the creation and performance of a growing array of identities among Argentines living in and outside their homeland. Throughout this dissertation I have argued that it is

due to the dialogues favoured by its inherent malleability that tango has allowed multiple ways of articulating a sense of Argentine identity.

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Appendix A: *Mi noche Triste - Tango*

Music: Samule Castriota / Lyrics: Pascual Contursi

Percanta que me amuraste
en lo mejor de mi vida
dejándome el alma herida
y splin en el corazón,
sabiendo que te quería,
que vos eras mi alegría
y mi sueño abrasador...
Para mi ya no hay consuelo
y por eso me encurdelo
pa' olvidarme de tu amor.

Cuando voy a mi cotorro
y lo veo desarreglado,
todo triste, abandonado,
me dan ganas de llorar,
me detengo largo rato
campaneando tu retrato
pa' poderme consolar.

De noche cuando me acuesto
no puedo cerrar la puerta
porque dejándola abierta
me hago ilusión que volves.
Siempre llevo bizcochitos
pa' tomar con matecito
como cuando estuvieras vos...
Y si vieras la catrera
como se pone cabrera
cuando no nos ve a los dos.

Ya no hay en el bulin
aquellos lindos frasquitos
adornados con moñitos
todos de un mismo color,
y el espejo esta empañado,
si parece que ha llorado
por la ausencia de tu amor.

La guitarra en el ropero
todavía esta colgada;
nadie en ella canta nada
ni hace sus cuerdas vibrar...
Y la lámpara del cuarto
también tu ausencia ha sentido
porque su luz no ha querido
mi noche triste alumbrar.

Woman, you dumped me
at the prime of my life
leaving my soul wounded
and dullness in my heart,
knowing that I cared for you,
that you were my joy
and my burning dream...
For me there's no possible solace,
and that's why I'm getting drunk
to forget about you love.

When I return to my room
I find it all messed up,
saddened, abandoned,
I feel like crying,
and I spend long hours
staring at your portrait
to find solace.

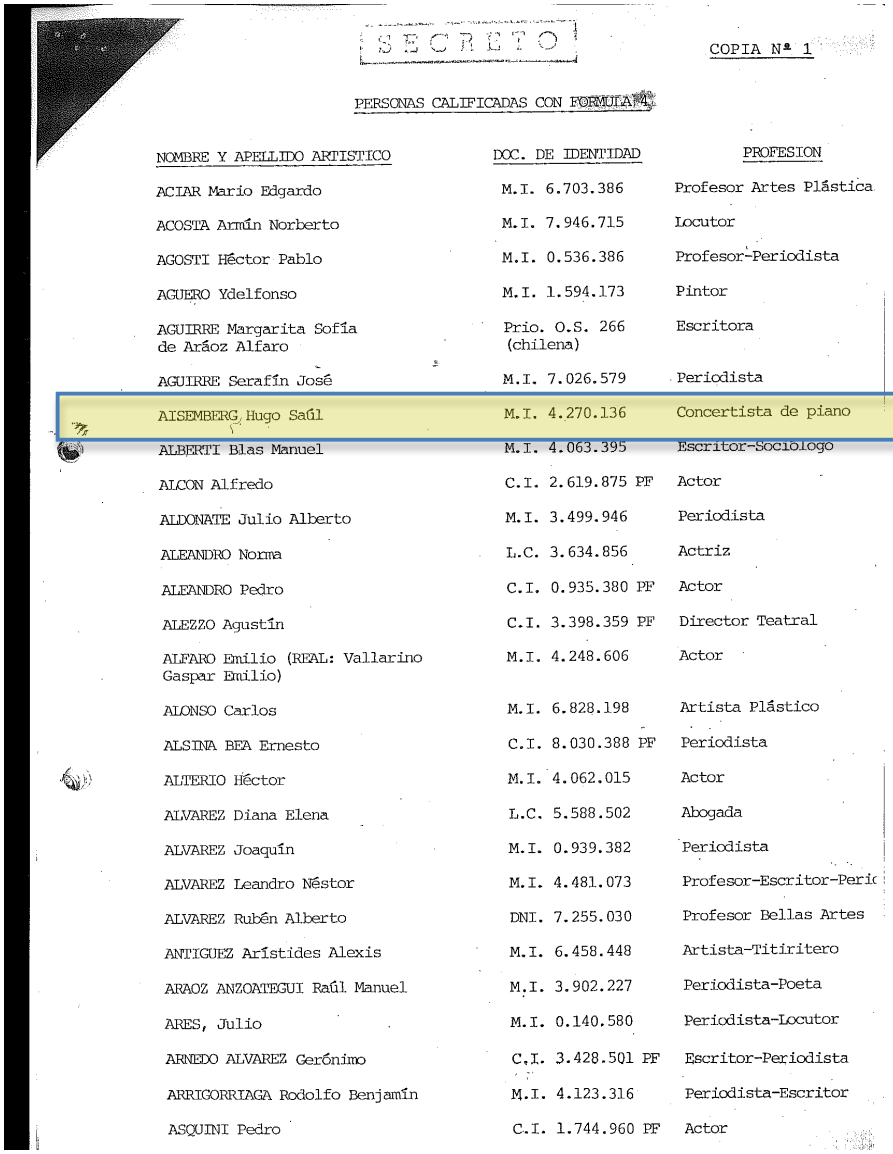
At night when I go to bed
I can't close the door
because leaving it open
I make believe that you'll back.
I always bring cookies
to accompany the mate
as if you were still here.
And if could see the bed
how upsets it gets
when it does not see us both.

There are no longer in the room
those pretty little bottles
decorated with little ribbons,
all of the same color,
and the mirror looks foggy,
it seems that it has cried
for the absence of your love.

The guitar in the closet
is still hanging
nobody ever sings anything
or makes its strings vibrate...
And the lamp in the room
also has felt your absence
because its light has not wanted
to light up my sorrowful night.

Appendix B:

Copies of sections of one of the many lists of musicians, writers, profesors, actors, and journalists suspected of subversive activities the Military Junta compiled as part of *Operación Claridad*. The pages included here first made public in an article published in the Argentine newspaper *El Clarin* on March 24, 1996. I have highlighted the names of four musicians that were included in these blacklists: piano concertist Hugo Saúl Ainsemberg; Folklore composer, instrumentalist, and lyricist Jaime Davalos; tango violinist Szmsia Bajour; and tango singer, guitarist and composer Juan Carlos Cedrón.



SECRETO

COPIA Nº 1

PERSONAS CALIFICADAS CON FORMULA 4

NOMBRE Y APELLIDO ARTISTICO	DOC. DE IDENTIDAD	PROFESION
ACIAR Mario Edgardo	M.I. 6.703.386	Profesor Artes Plástica
ACOSTA Armún Norberto	M.I. 7.946.715	Locutor
AGOSTI Héctor Pablo	M.I. 0.536.386	Profesor-Periodista
AGUERO Ydelfonso	M.I. 1.594.173	Pintor
AGUIRRE Margarita Sofía de Aráoz Alfaro	Prio. O.S. 266 (chilena)	Escritora
AGUIRRE Serafín José	M.I. 7.026.579	Periodista
AISEMBERG, Hugo Saúl	M.I. 4.270.136	Concertista de piano
ALBERTI Blas Manuel	M.I. 4.063.395	Escritor-Sociologo
ALCON Alfredo	C.I. 2.619.875 PF	Actor
ALDONATE Julio Alberto	M.I. 3.499.946	Periodista
ALEANDRO Norma	L.C. 3.634.856	Actriz
ALEANDRO Pedro	C.I. 0.935.380 PF	Actor
ALEZZO Agustín	C.I. 3.398.359 PF	Director Teatral
ALFARO Emilio (REAL: Vallarino Gaspar Emilio)	M.I. 4.248.606	Actor
ALONSO Carlos	M.I. 6.828.198	Artista Plástico
ALSINA BEA Ernesto	C.I. 8.030.388 PF	Periodista
ALTERIO Héctor	M.I. 4.062.015	Actor
ALVAREZ Diana Elena	L.C. 5.588.502	Abogada
ALVAREZ Joaquín	M.I. 0.939.382	Periodista
ALVAREZ Leandro Néstor	M.I. 4.481.073	Profesor-Escritor-Perio
ALVAREZ Rubén Alberto	DNI. 7.255.030	Profesor Bellas Artes
ANTIGUEZ Arístides Alexis	M.I. 6.458.448	Artista-Titiritero
ARAOZ ANZOATEGUI Raúl Manuel	M.I. 3.902.227	Periodista-Poeta
ARES, Julio	M.I. 0.140.580	Periodista-Locutor
ARNEDO ALVAREZ Gerónimo	C.I. 3.428.501 PF	Escritor-Periodista
ARRIGORRIAGA Rodolfo Benjamín	M.I. 4.123.316	Periodista-Escritor
ASQUINI Pedro	C.I. 1.744.960 PF	Actor

SECRETO

ASTESANO Eduardo Bartolo	M.I. 2.180.656	Abogado-Escritor
AYALA GAUNA Velmiro Bienvenido	M.I. 2.221.526	Profesor-Escritor-Argumentista de Cine, T.V.y Radio
AVERBACH Reinaldo	M.I. 3.692.849	Locutor-Publicista-Periodista radial
BADER Oscar Ricardo	DNI.10.018.551	Periodista
BAGU Sergio José	M.I. 0.101.657	Periodista-Profesor Universitario
BAJOUR Szymsia	C.I. 2.993.677 PF	Músico
BARRAGAN Isidro Julio	M.I. 4.044.007	Pintor Plástico
BAYER Osvaldo Jorge	M.I. 4.032.317	Gremialista-Periodista
BENAVENTE Saulo	M.I. 0.382.351	Escenógrafo
BERENGUER Elsa	L.C. 0.826.009	Actriz
BERMUDEZ José	M.I. 3.351.380	Docente-Dibujante-Artista Plástico
BERNETTI Jorge Luis	M.I. 4.538.634	Periodista
BERNI Delisio Antonio	M.I. 0.586.471	Pintor
BIANCHI Marta	C.I. 4.732.762 PF	Actriz
BIDON CHANAL Daniel Rodolfo	C.I. 5.891.309 PF	Artista
BIDON CHANAL Jorge Julio	M.I. 0.041.261	Artista
BISCIONE Carlos	M.I. 2.178.290	Escultor
BOERO Alejandra (REAL: Digiano Viera Boero Ofelia)	L.C. 3.375.387	Actriz
(1) BONARDO Augusto Domingo	M.I. 0.651.618	Periodista-Comentarista Locutor-Productor de TV
BRANDONI Luis	C.I. 4.583.314 PF	Actor
BRINDISI Rodolfo	C.I. 3.231.974	Actor
BRISKY Norman	M.I. 6.507.306	Actor
BRUNO Víctor	M.I. 6.218.457	Actor
BRUZZONE Alberto Tito	M.I. 0.231.086	Artista Plástico
BUTINOF Roberto Leo	M.I. 5.859.688	Artista de Variedades-Titiritero

CALI DIDIO Rosario Américo	M.I. 3.307.921	Abogado-Escritor
CALVO Carlos Mauricio Andrés	M.I. 5.335.440	Periodista
CANTO Alba Estela	L.C. 0.274.247	Escritora
CARELLA Carlos	M.I. 4.462.040	Actor
CARLEN María Adela	L.C. 3.615.381	Locutora
CARLINO Alfredo Vicente	M.I. 4.092.215	Poeta-Periodista
CASAL Helio Marcial	M.I. 1.671.068	Artista Plástico
CASTILLO Abelardo Luis	M.I. 4.674.147	Periodista
CAVANO Miguel Angel	M.I. 1.467.770	Redactor-Periodista
~~CAZES CAMARECO Pedro Luis~~	~~M.I. 4.539.331~~	~~Periodista~~
CEDRON Juan Carlos	M.I. 5.315.676	Músico-Compositor
CIDADE Ramón Gumersindo	M.I. 4.776.358	Artista
CORDOBA ITURBURU Cayetano Policinio	M.I. 0.162.543	Periodista-Escritor-Crítico de Arte
CORTAZAR Julio	M.I. 1.227.198	Escritor
COSSA Roberto Mario	C.I. 3.561.950 PF	Escritor Teatral
CRILLA Hedy	C.I. 2.548.329 PF	Directora Teatrl
CRISTALDO Adolfo	M.I. 0.403.293	Redactor
CUNEO Enrique Dardo	M.I. 0.123.016	Periodista
CUZZANI Agustín Antonio	C.I. 1.658.096 PF	Escritor-Abogado
DAVALOS Jaime	M.I. 3.955.001	Guitarrista-Compositor Poeta-Folklorista-Músic
D'ATRI Raúl Celso	M.I. 7.353.070	Periodista
DELGADO Graciela Susana	C.I. 4.760.961 PF	Corresponsal
DELL'ACQUA Amadeo	C.I. 0.501.128 PF	Pintor Plástico (peruar
DI MAURO Eduardo Francisco	M.I. 6.460.478	Artista-Educador-Titiritero
DI MAURO Héctor Antonio	M.I. 6.460.477	Titiritero
DOMINGUEZ DE CASTRO Ricardo	C.I. 85.796 (Salta)	Periodista
DRAGUN Osvaldo	M.I. 4.490.135	Escritor-Dramaturgo-