

YOUR COMPOSERS

A MEDIA LUZ, *Tango*

EDGARDO DONATO (1897-1963)

CARLOS CESAR LANZI (Lyrics)

Edgardo Donato was a violinist, orchestra leader and composer of tangos; a son of Italian parents with eight brothers and sisters, with three of them turned musicians: Ascanio, cellist and composer, Osvaldo, pianist and composer and Edgardo, violinist. Born in Buenos Aires, he later moved to Montevideo, Uruguay, where he studied music with his father Ernesto, who played the cello. Afterwards, he went to the Franz Liszt Conservatoire and became a professional musician at a very young age playing with the orchestra of Negro Quevedo in Montevideo. His first successful tango was *Julián* in homage to the leader Julián González made famous by Rosita Quiroga. After 1923 he composed his most famous tangos, like *A media Luz*, *La cumparsita*, *El choclo*, and *Caminito*; tangos that have become classical ones. *A Media Luz* (In dimmed lights), gives account of an address in "Corrientes 348" on the second floor of a building situated at the heart of Buenos Aires – a neighbourhood with famous theatres, such as, the *Gran Rex Theatre*, (Av. Corrientes 855), *Opera Theatre* (Av. Corrientes 860), *El Nacional Theatre*, (Av. Corrientes 960), far away are the *Lola Membrives Theatre*, (Av. Corrientes 1280) and the *Blanca Podesta Theatre*, (Av. Corrientes 1283). Also *La Giralda Café* in Av. Corrientes with Uruguay Street, where you could still have a hot chocolate with *churros* or *fritters*, and of course, we have the *Luna Park Stadium* in Av. Corrientes and Bouchard Street, known as the Palace of Sports. In these surroundings was a studio apartment containing a piano, a mat, a night light, a phone and a phonograph which cried the music of old tangos; and all in *dimmed lights*, the two lovers and kisses, everything, how magical love was! Donato wrote the music of this tango when travelling on a streetcar and it was premiered in a musical play named *Su Majestad La Revista* sung by Lucy Clory. This tango was recorded later by Firpo, Canaro and Carlos Gardel.

LIBERTANGO, *Tango*

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)

Astor Piazzolla was a bandoneón player, pianist, conductor, composer and arranger. As a musician he is followed by younger generations who wanted to take tango beyond its boundaries. Piazzolla struggled to make himself understood because he was not following the trends of traditional tangos; he wanted to elevate it to higher levels, in a manner of speaking, to dress it with a smart suit to be listened to rather than to be danced. In spite of all the controversy that "Piazzolla was not tango" he had been immortalized with several tangos written in his honour, for example, the one written by Julio de Caro which brought much controversy. He composed his first tango *La catinga* in 1932. As a boy he crossed paths with Gardel and appeared briefly in the film *El día que me quieras* which was of great significance for Piazzolla's future as a musician. His first formal tango was *El Desbande* written in 1946, he then looked for a new style and almost abandoned playing bandoneón and dedicated himself to writing music and continued with his studies, it was 1949; four years later he presented *Buenos Aires* at the Fabien Sevitzky competition which was played by the Symphonic Orchestra of *Radio del Estado*.

In spite of winning first prize it was badly received by

the critics. Nevertheless his prize was a grant to study in France with Nadia Boulanger who advised him not to abandon his tango roots. His father died in 1959 and he wrote his famous *Adios Nonino* while still in New York. He came to Buenos Aires once more and formed his first Quintet: bandoneón, violin, bass, piano, and electric guitar and played a concert at the Philharmonic Hall, New York in 1965; one year later he commenced a new style of composition the "tango song"; in 1969 he wrote *Balada para un Loco*, winning second prize at the *Iberoamerican Music Festival* and in 1971 he composed *El Pueblo Joven*, oratorio premiered in Saarbruck, Germany, and in the same year formed his *Conjunto 9*; they played at the Italian RAI TV. Next he fulfilled his dream and gave a concert at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires but in 1973 decided to move to Italy for he had in mind a series of recordings; the most famous being *Libertango* a beautiful piece with the unmistakable rhythm of tango. The meaning of *Libertango* is the sense of freedom Piazzolla allowed his musicians, with special reference to *Octeto Nuevo de Buenos Aires* formed around 1954, for whom he wrote this tango, in his efforts to treat it as music based on the melodic, harmonic of the tango rhythm, but free from the boundaries set up within its origin. The Octeto Buenos Aires marked the beginning of "tango nuevo" era, in which the limit of Tango is defined by the musicians' capabilities and not by exterior pressure.

DON JUAN, *Tango*

ERNESTO PONZIO (1885-1934)

RICARDO J. PODESTA (Lyrics)

Ernesto Ponzio was a *criollo*, son of an Italian family from Naples, he entered the Conservatoire of Alberto Williams but could not finish his studies due to the death of his father. Therefore, he started playing the violin in taverns and canteens when he was 14 years of age; after playing his instrument he passed around a little plate asking for tips, by this time he acquired the nickname of *El Pibe* known in the *tanguero* ambience for this name rather than for his real one. Still in his teens he formed a Trio with Genaro Vásquez, violinist, and Luis Teissaire, flute, (who wrote *Entrada Prohibida*, tango); they played at El Hansen, (a place which served Andalusian food, and German beer) also El Tambito, and in the houses of Laura and María la Vasca. He was famous for carrying a pistol at all times, and for this reason was in trouble with the police several times. His friend Cirilo Allende wrote the lyrics of *El Pibe Ernesto* to celebrate his freedom from jail, shortly afterwards the government dictated an armistice decree on 8th July 1925. He wrote other tangos, such as, *El azulejo*, *Don Natalio*, *La milonga*, *Culpas ajenas* and *Avellanado*. He decisively contributed to the development of tango in its first period. He briefly appeared in the first Argentine talking picture entitled *Tango*, directed by Luis Moglia Barth and premiered at *The Real Cinema*, in Buenos Aires on 27th April 1933, about one year before his death.

Don Juan, tango, was premiered in 1905 at *Mamita* club and was made popular during the nights at El Hansen. It was called *El panzudo* first and later *Mozos Guapos* but ended with the name of *Don Juan* in homage to the owner of a restaurant located in Palermo named Juan Cabello, the place in which Ponzio worked. The tango commenced in an auspicious manner, frolic in the style of an old anonymous couplet ... "in the tango I

am so audacious that when I make a tango figure it is spread in the north although I made it in the south." *Don Juan* was so popular that it was recorded by Pichuco twice and by *Di Sarli* three times in 1941, 1951 and 1954, by *Maderna* once in 1946, and *Bassio* recorded it another three times.

GALLO CIEGO, *Tango*

AGUSTÍN BARDI (1884-1941)

He was born in the town of Las Flores province of Buenos Aires, still a child, his father sent him to live with his brother who played the guitar, in the neighbourhood of *Barracas*; his uncle sang *cifras*, (song with no specified number of verses, with no more than eight syllables sung by payadores), also milongas, country songs and some original tangos. He taught Agustín the more simple tones even when the boy could not spread his fingers to reach some guitar positions avoiding certain songs because he did not have enough strength to clasp with force the strings in a *cejilla* of the Fa key. He soon surpassed his uncle's repertoire and began to connect with his first melodies. When he was thirteen years old went to work at the Rail Station for it was a secure job but left when he was required to do the obligatory military training; after this he went to work for a company called *La Cargadora* where he remained until he reached pension age in 1935. This was not a problem for he did both: worked in the mercantile job and composed tangos, always refusing to form his own orchestra. He played the violin at the Café El Griego until one day by chance he sat in front of a piano and made himself a pianist – playing by ear in different groups. Vicente Greco hired him to play at *El Estribo* and later wrote his first piano composition *Vicentito* in his honour. In 1914 Bardi played at the side of Eduardo Arolas and afterwards with the orchestra of Francisco Canaro on the occasion of the 1921 carnival and after this job dedicated completely to composition and wrote *Nunca tuvo novio*, *Independiente Club* or *La guinada*.

As a composer Bardi wrote tangos of great quality with nationalistic elements such as the pieces of *¡Que noche!* and *Lorenzo*; when talking with Luis Adolfo Sierra he said he felt the tango with country's essence as he would like to transpose the traditional creola sensitivity to the music of tango, for example, *Se han sentado las carretas*, *El baqueano*, *El cuatrero* the theme of these partituras are related to rural scenes. *Gallo Ciego* (blind cock), tango was premiered around 1914 when Bardi formed a trio with Graciano De Leoni and Eduardo Monelos, violin, and with them played it for the first time. Later on, the orchestra of Julio De Caro contributed to the popularity of the *Blind Cock* which had become a classic.

PALOMITA BLANCA, *Waltz*

ANSELMO AIETA (1896-1964)

Aieta was born in Buenos Aires and never left town; he was a bandoneón player, composer and formed his own band. He was taught by Tano Genaro and wrote *La Primera sin Tocar* in 1912. Aieta played with several bands, for example, with Eduardo Monelos, Eduardo Arolas, Agustín Bardi, Virgilio Carmona and Francisco Canaro's Orchestra. After 1922, he formed his own orchestra under his name and played in well-known cafés such as: *El Nacional*, *Germinal* and *Guarany* also

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(1903-1994)

