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# PIAZZOLLA

Les Violons du Roy

Jean-Marie Zeitouni



**Astor Piazzolla**

# Les Violons du Roy

ORCHESTRE DE CHAMBRE - CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



In the 1940s the tango began to decline somewhat, and was at risk of evolving from a dance form into a purely musical form, that is, into music designed for the concert hall, such as a minuet from a classical symphony or a waltz by Chopin. Certain masters, such as Anibal Troilo (1914-1975), managed to innovate musically while remaining faithful to the dance. At this point Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) came on the scene. Born in Argentina to Italian parents, he spent his youth in New York. In the wake of Gardel, he returned to his native country in 1936, and joined Troilo's orchestra as bandoneonist, pianist, and arranger. In 1946, he founded his first ensemble and became noted for his audacious harmonies and his often astringent style.

Piazzolla had a great admiration for Bartók and Stravinski. He had also studied composition with Alberto Ginastera and Nadia Boulanger, who strongly urged him to use his talent in the service of the tango; this made his compositions a unique mixture of Argentine tradition, jazz, and art music. Beginning in the 1950s, he shaped the *tango nuevo*, a form in constant evolution, judged as heretical by purists, which even caused him to be excluded from certain books or articles devoted to the history of the tango!

With more than 250 works, Piazzolla is now viewed as the "savior" of the tango. He is also recognized as the composer who has integrated the tango into contemporary music, breaking the boundaries of genres, as evidenced by his collaborations with diverse performers such as Georges Moustaki, Gerry Mulligan, Gary Burton, Keith Jarrett, and Mstislav Rostropovitch.

## **ASTOR PIAZZOLLA** (1921-1992)

### **Las Cuatro Estaciones porteñas**

**28:49**

Les Quatre Saisons de Buenos Aires | *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*

ARRANGEMENT POUR VIOLON SOLO ET CORDES DE LEONID DESYATNIKOV

ARRANGED FOR SOLO VIOLIN AND STRING ORCHESTRA BY LEONID DESYATNIKOV

- 1 :: **Verano porteño** (Été | *Summer*) 6:28
- 2 :: **Otoño porteño** (Automne | *Autumn*) 7:50
- 3 :: **Invierno porteño** (Hiver | *Winter*) 7:58
- 4 :: **Primavera porteña** (Printemps | *Spring*) 6:33

PASCALE GIGUÈRE VIOLON | VIOLIN

Deux tangos pour orchestre à cordes

*Two tangos for string orchestra*

**7:31**

- 5 :: **Coral** 4:03
- 6 :: **Canyengue** 3:28
- 7 :: **Fuga y Misterio** (arr. J. Bragato) 4:07

## **JOSÉ BRAGATO** (1915-)

- 8 :: **Graciela y Buenos Aires**

**7:30**

POUR VIOLONCELLE SOLO ET CORDES | *FOR SOLO CELLO AND STRINGS*

BENOÎT LOISELLE VIOLONCELLE | CELLO

## **ASTOR PIAZZOLLA**

- 9 :: **Milonga del Ángel** (arr. J. Bragato) 6:57
- 10 :: **La Muerte del Ángel** (arr. J. Bragato) 3:08

# English

# PIAZZOLLA

The Argentinean tango breathes sensuality, passion, even violence, yet often emanates a profound nostalgia. It was born towards the end of the nineteenth century in the slums of Buenos Aires, drawing musical and rhythmic ideas from European immigrants, Argentine *gauchos* (peasants), and Blacks. It transforms sexual conquest into a choreographic ritual in which the dominant man appropriates the woman, without a look, in an implacably rhythmic encounter.

Originally sung or played by small makeshift orchestras, the tango rapidly became associated with the bandoneon, a button accordion with a melancholy timbre. This instrument often substitutes for the voice and allows for great agility and an abundance of ornamental figures.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the tango moved out of the brothel and became accepted in working-class balls and in Argentinean salons. A fascinated and scandalized Europe discovered it in turn, thus assuring that it received international attention. Movies and the recording industry were not far behind: notorious stars such as Rudolf Valentino (1895-1926) and Carlos Gardel (1887-1935) brought the tango with them into the spotlight.

## **:: Milonga del Ángel La Muerte del Ángel**

In the 1960s, Piazzolla composed four works known as the “angel series,” some of which were destined for a play by his compatriot Alberto Rodríguez Muñoz. *Milonga del Ángel* and *La Muerte del Ángel* were adapted for strings by José Bragato. The milonga is a nineteenth-century dance that pre-dated the tango; it is distinguished by its interiority and its slower tempo, recalling that of the habanera. The languorous *Milonga del Ángel* (1965) exudes an incomparable charm, with a light touch of swing. The piece offers a striking contrast to *La Muerte del Ángel* (1962), a nervous, violently syncopated and fugal tango, which is softened by a central episode that recalls the milonga.

**IRÈNE BRISSON**

TRANSLATED BY **SALLY CAMPBELL**



## **:: Las Cuatro Estaciones porteñas**

For Argentineans, the word *porteño* refers to Buenos Aires. *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* were composed between 1965 and 1969, beginning with *Verano*. The four pieces may be played separately, and even in an order different from what we expect. They were originally written for quintet with piano and bandoneon, and have frequently been transcribed with variants. The Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov (born in 1955), at the request of the violinist Gidon Kremer, liberally re-worked and arranged them for violin and string orchestra, in order to pair them with the *Four Seasons* of Vivaldi. You'll find hints of themes that don't come from Piazzolla....

Four seasons in the form of tangos, abrupt and languorous in turn, bringing together with rare success the syncopated rhythmic clichés of dance, the counterpoint of Bach, touches of the Romantic and of Impressionism (the lyrical *Invierno*), or outright jazz (*Verano*); and all enriched with savory dissonances and ornamented cadences around a broken arpeggio, in the manner of a concerto (*Primavera*).

## **:: Two tangos for string orchestra**

Piazzolla had the luxury of being able to form groups of two to eight musicians, and he made use of this by composing two tangos for string orchestra. The first, *Coral*, is a refined work, in which the harmonies and melodic forms of the tango master combine with the sober and interior character of Bach's chorales. In contrast, the second tango, as defined by the Buenos Aires slang term *canyengue*, seems more primitive, lively and nimble, and even slightly coarse.

## :: Fuga y Misterio

In 1967, Piazzolla wrote an *operita* (a chamber opera) called *Maria de Buenos Aires*; this work was closely tied to the world of tango, and was based on a libretto by his collaborator and friend, the poet Horacio Ferrer (born in 1933). It was Piazzolla's incursion here into the world of drama that gave rise to *Fuga y Misterio*, which José Bragato arranged for string orchestra in 1992. A fusion of the rhythm of tango and the language of Bach, for whom Piazzolla had a profound admiration, this dynamic *tango nuevo* ends, as the title suggests, on a mysterious and expressive coda in the manner of a slow movement from a baroque sonata.

## :: Graciela y Buenos Aires

In the various ensembles that he formed, Piazzolla surrounded himself with excellent collaborators, including José Bragato, the cellist from the Buenos Aires philharmonic orchestra. The latter was born in Italy in 1915 and arrived in Argentina in 1928. An arranger and member of Piazzolla's *Octeto Buenos Aires*, he transcribed many of the composer's works, and he integrated the classical cello into Argentinean popular music. *Graciela y Buenos Aires* is a touching example; the lyricism of Bragato's preferred instrument elegantly blends into a voluptuous tango. The work was written in one day, in 1971, as a birthday gift for the daughter of one of his colleagues, a girl named Graciela.



JOSÉ BRAGATO

FRENCH

# PIAZZOLLA

Le tango argentin respire la sensualité, la passion, la violence même, tout en étant souvent empreint d'une profonde nostalgie. Popularisé vers la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les bas-fonds de Buenos Aires, il emprunte ses idées musicales et rythmiques aux immigrants européens, aux *gauchos* (paysans) argentins et aux Noirs. Il transforme en un rituel chorégraphique la conquête sexuelle, durant laquelle l'homme dominateur s'approprie la femme, sans un regard, dans un corps à corps implacablement rythmé.

D'abord chanté ou confié à des petits ensembles instrumentaux de fortune, le tango est rapidement associé au bandonéon, un accordéon à boutons dont le timbre mélancolique se substitue souvent à la voix et permet une grande agilité et une abondance de figures ornementales.

Au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le tango sort des lupanars pour être accepté dans les bals populaires et les salons argentins. Fascinée ou scandalisée, l'Europe le découvre à son tour, lui assurant un rayonnement international. Le cinéma et le disque s'en emparent : des « monstres sacrés » tels Rudolf Valentino (1895-1926) et Carlos Gardel (1887-1935) l'entraînent dans le tourbillon de leur gloire.



## **:: Milonga del Ángel La Muerte del Ángel**

Dans les années 1960, Piazzolla composa quatre œuvres connues sous le nom de « série de l'ange », dont certaines étaient destinées à une pièce de théâtre de son compatriote Alberto Rodríguez Muñoz. La *Milonga del Ángel* et *La Muerte del Ángel* ont été adaptées pour cordes par José Bragato. La milonga est une danse du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, antérieure au tango, dont elle se distingue par son intériorité et par son tempo plus lent, rappelant celui de la habanera. Il se dégage de la langoureuse *Milonga del Ángel* (1965) un charme incomparable, avec un léger parfum de swing. L'œuvre offre un contraste saisissant avec *La Muerte del Ángel* (1962), un tango nerveux, violemment syncopé et fugué, adouci par un épisode central annonçant celui que l'on trouvera dans la milonga de cette série.

**IRÈNE BRISSON**

## **:: Las Cuatro Estaciones porteñas**

Pour les Argentins, *porteño* (la ville portuaire) s'applique à ce qui est relatif à Buenos Aires. Les *Quatre Saisons portègues* ont été composées entre 1965 et 1969, en commençant par *Verano*. Elles peuvent être jouées séparément et même dans un ordre différent de celui auquel on s'attend normalement. Écrites à l'origine pour quintette avec piano et bandonéon, fréquemment transcrites avec des variantes, elles ont été librement arrangées et retravaillées pour violon et orchestre à cordes par le compositeur russe Leonid Desyatnikov (né en 1955) à la demande du violoniste Gidon Kremer, pour être jumelées aux *Quatre Saisons* de Vivaldi. De là les quelques clins d'œil thématiques qui n'existent pas chez Piazzolla...

Quatre saisons en forme de tangos tour à tour brusques et langoureux, mariant avec un rare bonheur les clichés rythmiques syncopés de la danse à des contrepoints à la Bach, à des touches romantiques et impressionnistes (le lyrique *Invierno*), ou carrément jazzées (*Verano*), le tout enrichi de dissonances savoureuses et de cadences ornementées autour d'un arpegge brisé, à la manière d'un concerto (*Primavera*).

## **:: Deux tangos pour orchestre à cordes**

Ayant essentiellement privilégié des formations allant de deux à huit musiciens, Piazzolla compose en 1969 deux tangos pour orchestre à cordes. Le premier, *Coral*, est une œuvre raffinée, dans laquelle les harmonies et les formules mélodiques du maître du tango se conjuguent avec le caractère posé et intérieur des chorals de Bach. Par contraste, comme le définit le terme d'argot de Buenos Aires *canyengue*, le deuxième tango est davantage primitif, léger et un peu canaille.

## :: Fuga y Misterio

En 1967, Piazzolla écrit une *operita* (opéra de chambre) intimement liée à l'univers du tango, *Maria de Buenos Aires*, sur un livret de son collaborateur et ami, le poète Horacio Ferrer (né en 1933). C'est de cette incursion de Piazzolla dans le domaine dramatique que provient *Fuga y Misterio*, que José Bragato a arrangé pour orchestre à cordes en 1992. Fusion du rythme du tango et du langage de Bach, auquel Piazzolla vouait une profonde admiration, ce *tango nuevo* dynamique se termine, ainsi que son titre le suggère, sur une *coda* mystérieuse et expressive qui se déroule à la manière d'un mouvement lent de sonate baroque.

## :: Graciela y Buenos Aires

En formant ses différents ensembles, Piazzolla s'est entouré d'excellents collaborateurs, dont le violoncelliste de l'orchestre philharmonique de Buenos Aires, José Bragato, né en 1915 en Italie et arrivé en Argentine en 1928. Arrangeur et transcripteur de nombreuses compositions de Piazzolla, membre de son Octeto Buenos Aires, il unit le violoncelle classique à la musique populaire argentine. *Graciela y Buenos Aires* en est une touchante démonstration : le lyrisme de l'instrument de prédilection de Bragato se marie avec élégance à un tango voluptueux. L'œuvre fut écrite en un jour, en 1971, en guise de cadeau d'anniversaire pour la fille d'un de ses collègues, prénommée Graciela.



JOSÉ BRAGATO



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# PIAZZOLLA

## Les Violons du Roy

Jean-Marie Zeitouni

**ASTOR PIAZZOLLA** 1-4 :: Las Cuatro Estaciones porteñas

5-6 :: Deux tangos pour orchestre à cordes | *Two tangos for string orchestra*

7 :: Fuga y Misterio **JOSÉ BRAGATO** 8 :: Graciela y Buenos Aires

**ASTOR PIAZZOLLA** 9 :: Milonga del Ángel 10 :: La Muerte del Ángel

Pascale Giguère VIOLON | *VIOLIN*

Benoît Loiseau VIOLONCELLE | *CELLO*

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