

DJ workshop  
El Corte

Mayday DJ 2008

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# 1 Introduction

For a number of years El Corte organizes a Mayday DJ workshop on the Sunday of the first May weekend. We felt a need to restructure and update the (text used in) the workshop. Of course we are very grateful for Ad van den Brekel's preparatory work, which did provide an extensive summary we used for so many years in previous DJ workshops.

## **Purpose**

This workshop is primarily set up for people who want to start (or have recently started) DJ-ing in tango salons. We want to provide these DJ's with tools that will make their jobs easier. Mind you, we don't want to impose a set of rules. Use them as a guideline or a framework to test your own notions. Everybody is free to go his or her own way. The only thing we will do is hand you some material to think about, material which might open doors for you.

This set up will also make this workshop interesting for experienced DJ's, because there always is a chance getting stuck in the groove and fall into a routine way of playing the same music in the same structure over and over again. Last but certainly not least, this workshop is also for people who are interested in tango music and/or want to give their local DJ feedback, but don't speak the lingo.

## **What to expect?**

What are the subjects we will deal with in this workshop?

In chapter 2 we discuss the circumstantial conditions of a tango salon. As a tango DJ you don't perform in a vacuum. There are factors, which will influence a salon, either in a negative or positive way. Some of these factors can be influenced, some of them can't.

In chapter 3, 4 & 5 we will give a short sketch of the history of tango as a musical form and as a social phenomenon. It helps a DJ if s/he has some knowledge of the fundamentals of the tango's history.

Chapter 6 is about the musical classification of tango music. Classifying music serves a dual goal. First of all, the enormous amount of music that is available, will make it easy to lose your self in a musical labyrinth with no way out. Secondly, classifying music provides a DJ with an instrument to balance or vary the music in a salon.

The next step; how to structure a salon is a challenge we deal with in chapter 7. We will give you some instruments, which will enable you to create an atmosphere in a salon that is balanced and healthy: tanda and tandacycle(s), musical arches, cortina's and specials.

Chapter 8 concludes with some practical hints we learned the hard way; that is from experience.

In the appendices we will deal with some subjects, which do and at the same time don't really belong in this workshop, because they are either too technical and/or only interesting for a few participants.

## **Feedback**

If you want to give us feedback, we would like that very much. You can send it to [a.degraaff@hetnet.nl](mailto:a.degraaff@hetnet.nl). Finally a word of thanks for we could not have written it without the support and feedback of countless DJ's, tango teachers and the dancers from all around the world.

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## 2 Circumstantial conditions

A DJ can make or break a salon. However, even before starting to play music, there are some circumstantial conditions of a salon, a DJ should pay attention to. The success or failure of a salon depends on it. Not all these circumstantial conditions can be influenced. Some things you just have to accept and learn to live with. The conditions that do contribute to the success of a salon are:

### Room

Is there a single room to dance or are there more rooms? How is the dance floor situated? Where is your workspace and how is it situated?

To start with the last question: the DJ-s workspace is best situated close to the dance floor. The DJ has the best overview of the dance floor and that is the place where it is all happening. And also to feel the atmosphere on the dance floor, a place close by is logical.

To illustrate this, I quote Brwester and Broughton: “The truth about DJ-ing is that it is an emotional, improvisational art form and here the real scope for artistry lies. A good DJ isn’t just stringing records together, he is controlling the relationship between some music and hundreds of people. That’s why he has to see them. That’s why it couldn’t be a tape. That’s why it is a live performance. That’s why it is a creative art. Music is a hotline to people’s emotions, and what a DJ does is use this power constructively to generate enjoyment. Obviously his medium is music, but that’s just a means to an end. In a very real sense his primary medium is emotion – the DJ plays the feelings of a roomful of People.”<sup>1</sup>

The music should be heard everywhere but not in all places as loud as on the dance floor.. Most dancehalls have a space for dancing and a space for lounging (drinking, talking, sitting down and meeting people to dance with and maybe a little flirting). If possible, the sound volume should be a little less in the lounge area than in the dance area. If people have to shout, the music is too loud.

The way a space is arranged with tables, chairs and other furniture is also essential for traffic and communication. See to it that there are not too

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<sup>1</sup> Brwester and Broughton, Last night a DJ saved my life, 2006:19.

many obstacles. It hinders people in mixing freely and may cause a salon to be static.

Tables and chairs should be situated at the side of the room in a way that makes it possible for people to mix freely. If this is not possible, you can try to create more dynamics in a static crowd by playing cortina's, specials or shorter series of tangos, valsas and milonga's.

Too many tables and chairs will also cause a milonga to become static. People come in and form groups and tend to stay in this group, which has a tendency to claim a table and subsequent chairs.. If there are chairs or couches for approximately 40% of the dancers, this usually will be enough to prevent a milonga from becoming static.

## **Lights**

Is it possible to adjust the lights to the atmosphere of the night, the music you are playing or an atmosphere you want to create or change? Are there colour lights?

The lights play an important role in creating an atmosphere. By playing with lights you can accentuate the music or trim down the effects that music has on an audience. Colour lights (if available) do enlarge these possibilities, but there is also downside to this; it may create a restless atmosphere if you use them too much.

Red lights usually symbolize romantic, even 'sexy' music like Fresedo's and Calo's slow lyrical tangos. However, too much and too long red lights subconsciously irritates your audience. This is the case with all types of colour lights: too long and too much is annoying. It is wise to vary colour lights regularly. Blue and green neon lights have a cool feeling, which you can use for tango nuevo's and neotango's.

When there are no colour lights and/or dimmers, the possibilities of playing with lights are of course limited, but not impossible. You can decide to use or not to use a certain light. Or you can aim a lamp in another direction or move it to another place.

Experiment with lights. DJ-ing is more than only playing some music and as a DJ you also have a responsibility for creating an atmosphere people enjoy. DJ-ing can be, just like pop concerts, a multi media experience.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In progressive rock it is quite normal to use lights to enhance the effects of the music. This is certainly not a new concept. As early as 1911 the Russian composer Alexander Skryabin used "colored lights to flood the concert hall during the per-

## **Dance floor**

What is the quality of the floor? How big is the floor?

The roughness or texture of a floor will determine if it is fit for dancing or not. Most times the roughness of a floor can be treated, although not all dancehall owners are happy if you do. Always ask if it is allowed to make the floor more slippery (in case it is to strewn) or less slippery (when it is like an ice rink's floor).

Try to adapt the music to the state of the floor. Don't play 'big' or very fast music on a slippery floor, for it invites people to dance big or too fast and accidents are waiting to happen. The bigness of a floor is relative. If there are many dancers on a small floor it is crowded: play 'intimate' music. If there are few dancers, there is enough space and you can play big music like Pugliese.

## **Time**

What is the duration of a salon? When is the focal point of the salon?

On what day of the week the salon is organized?

Most salons have a fixed time of beginning and ending. So as a DJ you know how many time you have. You can make a scenario that you can adjust depending on what sort of responses you get. Or you can improvise all the way. Whatever you like!

Salons without a fixed ending time will make it a little more difficult but poses a greater challenge. Will you slowly let it go down (until the last dancing couples leaves the floor) or do you create a climax at a certain time, after which people go home?

Most salons will take from 3 to 8 hours. Whether a salon is a short one or a long one does make a difference. A long salon has a different dynamic than a short one.

A long salon does require a long stretch of concentration. To stay alert for 8 hours in a row is mentally exhausting. Take care in preparing yourself for it (maybe a scenario to fall back on when it doesn't go the way you want it to go). See to it that you are rested as you start.

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formance of his symphonic poem *Prometheus*." (Eduard Macan, *Rocking the classics. English progressive rock and counterculture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997:63).

The main characteristic of a long salon is that the audience you start with will not be the same you will end with. Dancers who visit a salon can be divided into three groups:

- The early birds: they arrive early and leave on time (family, job, other activities and obligations, etc.)
- The latecomers: they arrive late and usually stay until the end
- The diehards: they don't want to miss anything of a salon, they will be there from beginning until the last tango

In the middle of a salon you will notice a 'changing of the guards'. The early birds are planning to leave and the latecomers are starting to arrive. This can create some unrest. For a DJ this creates a challenging dilemma. At the same time s/he has to create a musical climax for the early birds and create rest for the newcomers who start to dance.

A short salon has a different dynamic. The 'changing of the guards' effect will be much less prominent or even absent. Usually you will be able to make a musical arc that covers the salon from begin to end. In longer salons there will be more two or more musical arcs.

If you use special music to break the habits of dancers, use them in the beginning sparingly or not at all. Later in the evening, when the dancers have built up confidence and dancing routine, you can play specials more often.

On which day of the week the salon is taking place is also important. A salon on weekdays will end earlier than in a salon in weekends. In weekends you can expect the atmosphere to be more relaxed than on weekdays. This effect will be intensified when the day(s) before were also spent dancing. The El Corte brunch salon is a good example.

## **Popularity**

It is difficult to estimate in advance how many people will come to a salon. There are a lot of complicating factors:

- What is the weather like?
- How was the advertising?
- Is there another salon (or another competing event) close by?
- What is the reputation of the salon?
- Is the salon well organized?
- Is the dancehall easy to find?

- Is there a good parking facility?

Suppose all traffic lights are green and a lot of people come to dance: for a DJ there are some pitfalls. What are those pitfalls you should pay attention to?

- Don't play too big, energetic music. You are inviting dancers to bump into each other. Too much bumping spoils everybody's fun, for a collision tends to influence far more than just four dancers. Certainly at the busiest part of a salon you will have to play not too energetic and big music. Stick to rhythmical mainstream music from la epoca de oro.
- If you use specials, use them sparingly. Specials tend to excite dancers and afterwards you will have to cool them down again. To calm a crowd you can play D'Agostino and Fresedo. Also milonga campera's will do the trick.
- Don't play too much unfamiliar music in the first few hours. Stick to music everybody knows and appreciates. Think about De Angelis, Troilo, D'Arienzo and Canaro. You will build up a lot of goodwill and that will give you enough opportunity for creating a more exciting atmosphere later on.

### **Special activities**

Are there any special activities, like a dance performance, a speech, a live orchestra a lottery or something else? There should be a balance between special activities and dancing, for dancing is what most people come for. Too many special activities will ruin a salon and leave the dancers frustrated.

Some organizers of a salon do not realize this. They love to hear their own voice (for too long) as they announce a show pair, etc. If you know this, you can tell them the effects it will have on the salon.

Here are some points that might be useful:

- Keep the breaks between the sets of an orchestra to a maximum of 15-20 minutes.
- In case of a live orchestra: know the schedule by heart, for dancers will ask for it. If you can get a play list, you can even tell them more.

- As a DJ you shouldn't try to compete with the orchestra and/or dancing performers. They are the stars, not you. So don't play music they are performing to or any other similar music.
- Play good danceable music that even might sound a bit boring. Don't attract attention by playing (too much) specials.

### **Dancers & visitors**

The dancers and other visitors will influence the atmosphere. They can make or break a salon. Are they in a good mood or energy or are they tired? Do they arrive with expectations or do they have an open mind? Try to 'read' the audience and try to play music they want to hear. Doing so you will sometimes be able to sustain a good energy or change a tired atmosphere.

Visitors are another story. Ask them what they expect. Sometimes you can please them with some specials. Everybody knows Piazzolla's Adios Nonino. You can also resort to playing well know tangos like La Cumparsita or El Choclo.

### **Conclusion & some cases**

So DJ-ing is a lot more than playing music. There are much more things you will have to pay attention to than you might have thought. However if you are alert and creative, you will notice things that threaten the success of a salon. By DJ-ing a lot at different salons, you will build up experience in DJ-ing as well as controlling (if possible) circumstantial conditions. Never hesitate to give the organization feedback in a professional way (that is respectful, constructive and not personal).

To conclude this first chapter I present you some cases I encountered at several milongas in several countries. The main question to you is to find a way to deal with these situations, Remember that there might be more solutions or that a situation I defined as problematic needn't be problematic for you. In this manual I won't include the answers, but if you are curious about how I solved this or want to offer some cases you experienced yourself, you can always mail me: [a.degraaf@hetnet.nl](mailto:a.degraaf@hetnet.nl).

#### *Case 1: Salsa versus tango?*

Once I DJ-ed at the TangoMango in Devon (England) and I played Teofilo Chantre's Roda Vida, which is a very 'salsa-able' piece of music.

There happened to be a few good salsa dancers present, who immediately started to dance salsa. Since salsa is a stationary type of dance and tango is not, this caused a bit of a traffic jam on the dancefloor. The festivals' hostess (Ruth) solved this in a brilliant way. How?

*Case 2: Chairs, chairs and ... more chairs!*

Sometime ago during an all night milonga in Edinburgh (Scotland) there was a 10 minute performance scheduled. The rest of the evening was meant dancing only. The organizers were convinced that during this performance everybody should have a chair to sit on. Before the milonga started they placed chairs and tables for the expected number of visitors. There was still enough space to dance for everybody.

What was the consequence of all those tables and chairs? And, more important, what can a DJ do to minimize this effect?

*Case 3: A restless DJ*

Once I visited a milonga in Munich (Germany) where a very restless DJ tried to create a completely new atmosphere with every piece of music he played. Can you guess what happened? And why?

*Case 4: A milonga with many interruptions*

Some organizers feel that an all night milonga should be a lot more than dancing only. So they plan danceperformances, live music, a lottery, a speech by the host and some interruptions. As the DJ you will have to fill the gaps between all the events. What kind of music should you play in a situation like this? Why?

### 3 Candombe, the black roots of tango

Every once in a while at a tango salon you hear some wild rhythmical drumming which might make you think you are in Africa. This drumming gives a happy carnivalesque energy to the dancers. Ten to one that the DJ put on a series of candombes. Quite often you will hear Carnavalito (performed by Lucio Demare), Azabache (Miguel Calo or Francisco Lomuto) El Tucu Tun (Enrique Rodriguez) or Taquito Militar (Quinteto Pirincho), just to name a few well known and often played candombes.

To most tanguero's candombe is nothing more than a milonga, only different, an exotic intermezzo in a salon. There is however a world of meanings behind candombe, a history which dates back the Spanish colonization of Latin America and the slave trade. And please do remember, candombe is an entirely different phenomenon than from milonga; dancing a candombe is very different from dancing milonga.

#### **What is candombe?**

Just like word tango the word candombe (pronunciation: can-dom-bay) has multiple interrelated meanings. Apart from a form of dance and music, candombe also means a society of slaves from a distinct African region (tribe) and also a place where they could meet each other and maintain their own culture. Furthermore candombe means, a group of African people living in Latin America as slaves, who have a language, culture and history in common.

As matter of fact, you can view the candombe (which is also called a *nacione*) as a sate within a state, although the power of a *nacione* is marginal compared to the state they existed in. The birth of the candombes dates back to the beginning of the colonization of Latin America in the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The first negro states (*naciones*) in Latin America's colonial history date back to the seventeenth century (Mexico and Brazil). In Buenos Aires the first *naciones* date from the eighteenth century and they disappeared at the end of the nineteenth century. Their disappearance was caused by the enormous wave of immigrants that came to Argentina and the interracial marriages. The number of blacks in Buenos Aires dropped to a few percents at the beginning of the twentieth century. Juan Carlos Caceres states in the liner notes of his CD *Murga Argentina* that around 1850 approximately one in every three inhabitants of Buenos Aires was black.

## **The colonial era**

When Columbus discovered Latin America, it was a relatively sparse populated continent with a lot of great economical possibilities. The soil was fertile and therefore suited for farming and cattle breeding. It was also rumoured that the soil contained great quantities of minerals which could be exploited by mining them.<sup>4</sup>

To exploit the riches of this newly discovered continent, a lot of work needed to be done. The indigenous inhabitants of Latin America (by mistake Columbus called them Indians), were useless for this purpose. Either they weren't suited physically to do so or they wanted to stay independent.<sup>5</sup>

So labour had to be imported. In the beginning this meant slave trade. Millions of slaves were kidnapped from Africa and transported to Latin America to work there. When the slave trade was abolished in the middle of the nineteenth century, immigrants from all over Europe were called upon to fulfil this need.

Argentina at the time of the birth of tango existed out of four groups: the indigenous people (Indians), the Spanish colonist's offspring, the black slaves and their offspring from Africa and the immigrants from all over Europe.

## **Slaves, free blacks and their dance**

The slaves, which originated from different regions from Africa, succeeded to cling to their own tribal culture and adapt it to the predominantly catholic culture they had landed in. They were allowed to celebrate catholic holidays and they used these holidays to celebrate their own religion under the disguise of Catholicism.

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<sup>4</sup> This rumor was presumably fabricated by Columbus himself. Carlos Fuentes (1992) states that when Columbus discovered that there wasn't the prosperity he had hoped for, he created the myth of a new continent with gold and silver, in the hope that this would justify his expedition in the eyes of his lady protector, Queen Isabella.

<sup>5</sup> Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century there have been skirmishes between the indigenous inhabitants of Argentina and the governmental power in Buenos Aires.

Epiphany (January 6) was their favourite holiday as it involved the coronation of a black king. The slave societies (naciones) took advantage of the situation to crown and honour their own black kings.

When slaves arrived in Latin America they had established (with their masters' permission) a sort of tribal societies, which rested on the principle of solidarity.<sup>6</sup> Their main objective was to free slaves by buying them from their masters free them, and also the celebration of their own culture and religion.

An important function for the maintenance of their own culture, was fulfilled by the dance festivals they organized. Especially the carnival with its murgas and comparsa's was one of the most attention attracting activities in this phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

Just after the Revolution of 1810 Argentina abolished slavery. Juan Manuel de Rosas freed the slaves and took part in the carnival himself. He sat beside the throne of the black king of the carnival. After the Confederates lost their power in 1852, the negro carnival also lost its protector De Rosas.

The negros withdrew to their own neighbourhoods and danced in their own clubs. Sebastian and Labrana conclude that "the carnival parades lost their couleur locale and would never regain the atmosphere from the rhythmical, colourful days from before the Confederacy. The upper class of Buenos Aires, liberal and Unitarian, didn't accept this lacuna and urged their young members to go into the streets and replace the black joy. [...] This is how the comparsa (a masked group) of the society of Los Negros came into being, who made a great impression at the carnival of 1866. [...] A year later, only a few days after carnival, the negroes

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<sup>6</sup> The naciones were tolerated by the authorities, but just barely tolerated. For most activities they had to ask for a written permission, which could be revoked at any time, for no reason at all. At the end of the nineteenth century the naciones disappeared from the Argentinean society.

<sup>7</sup> Murgas and comparsas are a sort of informal orquestas, who were dressed in patriotic costume made music and danced for the public which were viewing the carnival parades. From Canaro it is known that he took part in these little orquestas. The difference between a murga and a comparsa lies in the race of the musicians and dancers, who accompanied the carnival parades. A murga is predominantly white while a comparsa is a black affair (Plisson, 2002). For more info on murgas: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murga>.

left their Barrio de Tambor and paraded through town while beating their drums.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Candombe and tango**

Candombe did bear little resemblance to the rural Argentinean dances and the dances imported from Europe. Candombe can be seen as a fusion between the various African dances and musical traditions. It is characterized by its wild rhythms, the improvised steps, the hunched shoulders and the energetic athletic movements. Also the cortes and quebradas play an important role in candombe dancing. Before tango was called tango, it was known as ‘el baile con cortes y quebradas’.

Candombe played a major role in the formation of tango. Latin American music in general and tango especially is the result of a gradual fusion of the music of the indigenous people, the European conquerors and the African slaves. While European song forms and instrumentation played a distinct role and indigenous rhythms and instruments fulfilled a more marginal role, the African factor is by far the most dominant factor in the evolution of Latin American music.

The candombe was born somewhere between 1750 and 1850. Tango came into being in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The three main musical genres which created tango are candombe, habanera and rural milonga.

It is likely that candombe had a energizing effect on the rural milonga and in doing so created the urban milonga (the one we dance to on salons).<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> After 1850 the blacks started to be more interested in white dances and vice versa the same thing happened, although not always in a positive way. For example, the white compadritos (tough guys) mocked the candombe during carnival parades.

Both candombe, milonga and tango can be seen as transgressive dances; which means dances which transcend social barriers.<sup>11</sup> In the phenome-

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Sebastian & Labrana, 1988. Translation by author.

<sup>9</sup> Nowadays most people associate candombe mostly with Uruguay and not the role it played in tango’s origin.

<sup>10</sup> Piazzolla often uses the rural milonga (milonga campera) rhythms. Listen for example to the bass lines of Milonga for three and Milonga del Angel.

<sup>11</sup> Chasteen (2004) states that candombe, milonga (Argentina), maxixie, samba (Brasília) and danzon, son (Cuba) are transgressive dances. The social barriers

non tango both black and white elements fused. In a later stadium tango was stripped of the black elements, as was to be expected of a country which strove to be the most European country of Latin America.

When listening to tango on a average salon, you will hardly notice the black roots of tango. The African influence shown mostly, is in the few candombes which did survive and the urban milonga's.<sup>12</sup> I have a vague suspicion that these camdombes are watered down versions of the originals from the nineteenth century.

The African influence in Latin American music and especially tango do show in the polyphonic character of the music. There are always several musical lines in tango, which are exchangingly dominant and supportively underlying. Without its African roots, tango would have been a monophonic phenomenon.

Fuentes (1992) concludes that "from the beginning black music facilitated the listener or dancer with an autonomous, personal, free and even rebellious rhythm, instead of attempting to force a dominant, predictable or prescribed pattern, which is customary in European music."<sup>13</sup>

Listening to candombe, you will find that it is precisely this musical anarchy, which makes candombe a dance which (almost) provokes you in improvising steps. And that is when the fun only starts.

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which are transcended in these dances are: race, gender, social-economical status and religion.

<sup>12</sup> In my music collection I have only approximately fifty candombes, which is marginal compared to the hundreds of (tango)milongas and valeses and thousands of tangos.

<sup>13</sup> Translated by author.

## 4 History of tango

### **The prehistory: 1850 – 1880**

In the nineteenth century, Argentina was a vast country, rich in raw materials, but scarcely populated. The ruling class wanted to reform Argentina into a modern nation by European standards, which meant Paris, at that time being the cultural centre of the world.

To develop this enormous potential meant a lot of labour and labourers were needed. The Argentine government solved this problem by developing an immigration policy. Their motto was to govern is to populate. Starting around 1860 this resulted that in over the following 80 years approximately 4 to 6 million immigrants entered Argentina. The majority of the immigrants came from the poorer southern regions in Europe (Italy, Spain, etc.), as well as the rest of Europe (Germany, Poland, England, etc.) and a considerable minority from Middle East.

In their attempt to convince Europeans to immigrate to Argentina, the recruiters sketched an image, which was too positive. Argentina wasn't the land of milk and honey, but a country that couldn't fulfil the high-strung expectations. The prospects of the immigrants were far from promising. This was caused by poverty, bad housing conditions, little chance of moving upward on a socio-economical scale and the melting pot of many different nationalities and cultures. Most of the immigrants wound up in the capital of Argentina, Buenos Aires. From 1869 to 1914, Buenos Aires grew from a relatively small South American capital (ca 180 000 inhabitants) to a metropolis (ca 1 500 000 inhabitants). The immigrants mostly lived in large overcrowded conventillos where a family all too often had only one room to live in. The conventillos were situated in the suburbios, an area where rural and urban values but also different cultures and nationalities clashed. The suburbios were generally viewed as the source of evil: crime, immorality, epidemics and ... tango!

### **The birth of tango: 1880-1890**

Tango probably materialized around 1880-1890. There is very little known about this period. What is known, however, is the atmosphere tango was born in. Tango was born in a society that was experiencing rapid socio-economical changes, which caused a lot of social stress. In a society that was characterized by a great cultural diversity (many nationalities from immigrants) with little perspective for a better future, immi-

grants looked for solace by making music and dancing to vent their feelings of nostalgia and frustration.

### **Intermezzo**

The original tango, both dance and music, may have evolved somewhere on a patio of a conventillo. Immigrants met there at night to talk and drank a glass, while reminiscing of their fatherland, where maybe it wasn't so bad after all. A Spaniard sang a sad ballad. A Greek came out of his room and accompanied the song by guitar. A Rumanian neighbour remembered that his violin had survived the harsh journey to Argentina.

Together they made music, and most of all they improvised. A musical mishmash was the result. After some time, a few Italian mothers danced a few steps of a folk dance, which they remembered from their childhood. Later that night, other immigrants played their music in a constantly changing musical set up and danced a lot. At the end of the evening everybody danced with everybody. This might have been the way tango started.

The many musical variants, from a variety of cultures the immigrants came from, may have met and interacted in the conventillos and later on the festivities in the barrios. Tango was thus formed by a great diversity of musical influences. Dominant influences in forming the tango were the habanera (Cuba), milonga (Argentina) and the candombe (Africa). Other minor musical influences were tango andaluz, klezmer, polka, waltz and fandango.

### **La guardia vieja: 1890-1917**

Around the turn of century, tango was a controversial phenomenon in Argentina. Tango was born in the lower class. Opponents came mostly from the upper class, a minority with a lot of influence. They saw tango as something to be ashamed of, a dance of thieves and whores. From 1910 onwards a middle class emerged. The rigid two-class division had disappeared as a consequence of social unrest. Education became available to more people than only the happy few. The middle classes also started to organize themselves politically. Backed up by an improving economical situation, they became a factor to be reckoned with. This development contributed to the growing popularity of tango.

As a dance, tango changed in this period from a sinful dance in the brothels to a more respectable dance in the cafetins. In this process the dance was also simplified. Tango became more and more accepted, although it took many more years before it was generally accepted. Lyrics, if used at all, were short and spicy, often in lunfardo. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the roughness of the lyrics was somewhat softened. Tango lyrics were in this time of minor importance. It was mostly about music. Only after Gardel sang *Mi Noche Triste* in 1917, tango cantando became popular. Well-known exponents of this era were the composers Villoldo and Mendizábal and the musicians Maglio, Greco & his Orquesta Típica Criollo, Arolas, Canaro and Firpo.

In this time musician were mostly amateurs without much musical education. Most of them couldn't even read music and played by ear. Improvisation and paying attention to what the public and dancers really wanted, was essential. Tango music formed the dance and the dance formed the music. Musicians moved from party to party and from barrio to barrio in regularly changing musical formations. This had as a consequence that most of the music from this early period was relatively simple and the styles of the orchestra's were quite similar. Canaro and Firpo, however, already clearly stood out with heir own sound.

### **Tango mania: 1912 – 1917**

Rich Argentines were used to spend their holidays in Paris. For their sons it was not unusual to make the grand tour through Europe as a rite de passage. Already in 1903, Argentine tango musicians came to Europe in the slipstream of the rich. Among them were Villoldo, Saborido and the married couple Gobbi-Rodriguez. Paris was famous for its recording techniques. Starting around 1905 the first tango records were produced. The market for records was good, because most of the dancehalls were not rich enough to afford a "live" tango orchestra.

In 1912, tango became quite suddenly very popular. It became the topic of conversation. There were tango dinners, tea dances where you could dance and also learn tango. Furthermore there were tango exhibitions and even a colour tango, which ranged between an orange like brown and yellow ochre.

The sudden outburst of tango in Paris is hard to explain. Most likely it can be traced back to the longing for the exotic and aesthetic, which was

characteristic for the belle époque. The Argentine elite, however, was shocked to see that tango, which they saw as disgusting and immoral, to be so favourably received in Europe. Tango's victory didn't come without counter forces. When tango started to become fashionable in Europe (first of all in Paris), the Argentine elite saw this as a deplorable thing: "Tango is in Buenos Aires a dance which is only danced in houses of ill repute and bars of the worst kind. Decent people never dance tango in decent salons. For Argentineans tango music evokes very unpleasant feelings". Thus spoke the Argentine ambassador in Paris.

Conservative forces in Europe were unanimous in their verdict: tango was evil because "of its sinful and voluptuous character which conflicted with morality".

Religious force both in Europe and the United States condemned tango. In Germany Kaiser Wilhelm II forbade his officers to dance tango in uniform. The attempts to ban tango were futile of course and may even have contributed to the popularity of tango. Tango became an overnight sensation and spread quickly all around the world: North America and Canada, Europe and even Japan, where baron Megata popularized tango on his return from Paris.

### **La guardia nueva: 1917 - 1935**

When the economic situation in Argentina deteriorated, tango also experienced its negative effects. In the twenties, tango lost much of its attraction. Many orchestras fell apart because its members made a career switch or emigrated. For this waning popularity several other causes can be mentioned: competition from American swing music and jazz, the talking pictures etc.

The character of tango music also changed in this period. It evolved from simple folksy dance music to more complicated listening music. In the early twenties, a division had arisen in tango between traditional tango and evolutionary tango. Canaro, Lomuto, De Dios Filliberto and De Angelis can be labelled as traditionalists. Examples of innovating evolutionary tango music are De Caro, Di Sarli, Troilo and Pugliese. Evolutionary tango became the more dominant form during the twenties and early thirties. The period of la guardia nueva ended in 1935, when Gardel died in a tragic plane crash and D'Arienzo formed his famous orchestra.

### **La epoca de oro: 1935 –1954**

With his rise to fame, D'Arienzo started the golden age of tango, which was to last to 1952 -1954. By playing old guardia vieja tunes in a modern rhythmical version D'Arienzo caused a sensation and lured the dancers back to the milongas. When in 1939 the Second World War started, the economy of Argentina got an extra stimulus, because Argentina exported food to America and Europe.. People earned enough money and partied a lot. These are the years that the grand orchestra performed in open-air concertos for thousands of dancing people.

After Juan Peron came to power in 1946, it even went better with tango. Peron broke with the liberal tradition of the thirties, when a lot of nationalistic values had been cast aside. The nationalistic Peron government orientated itself to conservative and religious values. For tango this was, curiously, a stimulus. The government decreed that radio should pay significant attention to Argentinean culture (music). This law had a downside, for radio was also to censor music they broadcasted. The aim was of course to protect morality. Lunfardo was to be avoided and lyrics were reshaped, so that it became decent. As a consequence some songs became nearly unrecognizable.

In a relatively short period, there was enormous amount of talent gathered together in Buenos Aires. The orchestras were full of talented musicians, which at their time started their equally successful orchestras. For example, Piazzolla played for some years with the Troilo orchestra before forming his own orchestra and Biagi played with the D'Arienzo set-up before going solo. The best example of an orchestra literally bursting with talent is Miguel Calo's Orquesta De Los Estrellas, which hosted at one time or another Salgan, Francini, Pontier, Federico and Maderna.

La epoca de oro ended in the period 1952 –54. In 1952 Evita Peron died, which had as a consequence that the political stability deteriorated. In order to restore order, a curfew was issued. For tango this was a handicap. In 1954 Piazzolla left for Paris, which may be considered the final accord of this period.

### **Tango nuevo: 1954 –1976**

In the fifties, a worldwide youth culture emerged, with pop music as an important exponent. Tango was viewed by the youths as nostalgic and nostalgia was clearly out of fashion. In Argentina a new generation grew

up, who saw tango as a boring activity, something their old fashioned and square parents engaged in. Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley and later on the Beatles and the Stones pushed tango to a marginal position.

Within tango there was also a great musical innovation going on. Piazzolla changed the concept of tango music definitively by developing tango nuevo arrangements. In the sixties and seventies, Piazzolla drifted away from mainstream tango, while experimenting and innovating with jazz and electronics. In the eighties, Piazzolla managed to find a balance between innovation and tango. Other exponents from tango nuevo are Salgan and Stampone.

### **La joven gaurdia: 1976 – 2000**

In the seventies pair dancing revived after two decades of “free dancing”. This was caused by the disco successes Saturday Night Fever and Grease. The many tango celebrities that toured Europe, North America and Asia in the early eighties caused a new interest in tango: Pugliese, Piazzolla, Sexteto Mayor and Color Tango. The dance show Tango Argentino also contributed a lot to the new fascination with tango. At the end of the eighties there was a renewed musical fascination for music from the Rio de la Plata region.

Another cause was, that under the junta that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983, thousands of political opponents disappeared, were tortured and murdered. Many Argentineans fled to Paris. Among them were the musicians Cedron, Mosalini and Beytelmann. The second tango wave also started in Paris, noting that it was much less forceful than the tango mania of the beginning of the twentieth century. This newborn popularity of tango in Europe and the USA also had a positive effect on the Argentinean tango scene. The new generation of tango musicians put a new zeal into it. Among them are Mederos and Warschausky (El Arranque).

In the nineties, outside Argentina musicians from other cultures and other musical disciplines also ventured into tango music: Carel Kraayenhof & Sexteto Canyengue, Tango for Three, Tango Real and van Esboeck & Masondo and Tango al Sur. Also classical musicians had a go at tango, mainly Piazzolla’s tango nuevo. The well known classical musicians Yo Yo Ma and Gidon Kremer covered Piazzolla’s music.

### **Neotango: 2000 - ?**

The latest musical development in tango is neo tango. After the success of the The Gotan Project's 'La revancha del tango' there followed many other modern "digital" remixes of mainly Piazzollismo's: Bajo Fondo Tango Club, Piazzolla Remixed, Narcotango and Tango Crash. The issue is whether neo tango is only a hype or permanent trend in tango music. The future will tell.

## 5 Evolution of tangomusic

### Introduction

Looking back at the history of tango, one cannot help being surprised at the enormous changes it has undergone time and time again. Tango went from conventillo, barrio to brothels and via the cafetins to the big dancehalls of the forties and fifties. Tango as a dance evolved from milonga via tangomilonga to tango. The musical line-ups changed from trio's and quarteto's, via orquesta tipicas to gran orquestas. And there is more that changed dramatically over the years, such as lyrics and the tempo music was played in. So let's focus on the musical evolution of tango.

### In the beginning

The origins of tango are shrouded in mystery. Not much of it is known, because apart from some incidental records, the class where tango originated (mostly poor immigrants and gaucho's who came to Buenos Aires) didn't write much about their lives.

I do not know of any sound recordings from the prehistory of tango, although Edison already invented his phonograph around 1889.<sup>14</sup> The music label Victor started to make tango recordings in 1904. At first this happened abroad (England, France and the United States). The first recordings from Alfredo Gobbi senior do date from this period. In December 1907 Victor sent a "travelling machine" to Argentina.<sup>15</sup> In 1910, 1912 and 1917 Victor's travelling machine revisited Buenos Aires and the Plata region. Several recordings were made of Angel Villoldo, Jose Razzano, Linda Thelma, Ignacio Corsini, Alonso & Minotti, Eduardo Arolas and Juan "Pacho" Maglio. The last one can be considered as the first superstar in tango. His popularity was immense and for some time gramophone records were called pacho's. In 1922 Victor founded its first permanent recording studio in Buenos Aires, where in 1926 the first

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<sup>14</sup> Laird, Sound beginnings. The early record industry in Australia. Sydney: Currency Press, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Victor's traveling machine can be seen as mobile phonograph that traveled through the America's, a predecessor of the mobile recording studio we know today

electrical recording was made: “La musa msitonga”, which was composed by Flores and Polito and sang by Rosita Quiroga.<sup>16</sup>

The first tango recording that I do know of dates back to 1909: “La bicicletta” from Angel Villoldo.<sup>17</sup> What is striking in this version is the European sound, especially castanets and an Italian opera voice. Soon after this the distinguished European influencers did fade away. For example, Francisco Canaro recorded in 1916 his first version of “Vibraciones del alma”, which sounded as a tango we know and recognize as tango today.<sup>18</sup> The transition from an outlandish Afro-European influenced sound to tango argentino took place in the period 1880/90 - 1910.

The first tangos we know are simpler in structure than later ones. Tango music has its origins from several musical sources. It is generally agreed upon that these sources are Cuban habanera (which functioned as a catalyzing force), Argentinean milonga and African candombe. There are, however, also several European influences on tango, such as polka, mazurka, flamenco, fandango and many more. It is evident that a music form in its embryonic phase still is filled with the elements of the musical sources it originated from. Therefore it only could be simply structured music. It took many years for those elements to mix in a melting pot to a phenomenon we now know and recognize as tango.

Furthermore, the first generation of tango musicians existed mostly out of amateurs. They were immigrants with little, if any at all, (musical) education. The children of the immigrants, the second generation, often got more education. This had its effects on the music of the twenties and thirties. In this period music becomes more sophisticated in both the musical structuring and the mastering of the musical instruments. The best example of this sophistication of the tango music is Julio De Caro.

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<sup>16</sup> Benedetti, 2004. If you want to know more about RCA Victor consult David Sarnoff's Internet library.

<sup>17</sup> This version can be found on the bonus CD that belongs to Plisson, 2002 (see Appendix A).

<sup>18</sup> This version can be found on El Bandoneon 129. For more examples from this period, I refer to the El Bandoneon series “Homenaje a la guardia vieja del tango”.

In the beginning the musical line-ups of tango formations were duos, trios and quarteto's. In the eve of the First World War, the *orquesta tipicas* came into existence. They were the musical formation tango artists used till they were replaced by the *gran orquesta* in the late thirties and early forties.

The first tango formations were made up of regularly changing line-ups, who performed all over town. Formations were formed on a very free basis. Ferrer points out that in this period tango music was more improvisation than imitation.<sup>19</sup> As a result there was a constant cross-cultural and cross regional pollination. Musicians had no choice to be flexible, which naturally implied a lot of improvising as they went along. The interaction between musicians and dancers was evident.<sup>20</sup> In later times this twoway interaction disappeared almost completely from tango music.

In the *orquesta tipicas* from the twenties and thirties and certainly the *gran orquestas* of the forties and fifties, there simply was no room for improvisation.

The duos, trios and quarteto's used the following instruments: harp, violin, guitar and flute. Sometimes the harp was replaced by mandolin or accordion. Later they are replaced by guitar, which set the harmonic structure around which violinist and flutist 'improvised'. Musicians in this period didn't confine themselves to a particular kind of music; apart from tango and milonga other kinds of music were part of their repertoire. Think about rancheras, paso dobles, foxtrots, polkas, marchas and so on.<sup>21</sup>

Bandoneon and piano came into tango at a later stadium. They replaced guitar and flute, because of their limited possibility to produce enough sound volume. The exact date of the entrance of bandoneon and piano into tango is not known. Opinions differ about this. Most likely the bandoneon made its appearance around 1890-1910, but this could well have been earlier. Birkenstock & Ruegg state that the bandoneon al-

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<sup>19</sup> Ferrer & Brave, 1989.

<sup>20</sup> Turner, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Especially Francisco Canaro and Enrique Rodriguez played other contemporary folkloristic music.

ready came to Buenos Aires in 1870.<sup>22</sup> A consequence of the integration of bandoneon into tango music was that, due to the technical difficulty of this instrument, the rhythms slowed down a bit.<sup>23</sup> The piano is believed to have made its entrance in tango around 1910. There are several anecdotes about how the bandoneon, that was originally a German instrument designed for church music, found its way to Argentina, to make the instrumentation for tango complete.<sup>24</sup>

One of them tells about a German sailor, who was not able to pay his bar bill and was forced to pawn his bandoneon. A compadre, who was fascinated by the bandoneon although he wasn't quite sure what it was, bought the bandoneon from the barkeeper, who might have been relieved to get rid of it, not knowing what to do with any way. After buying the bandoneon he locked himself into his room and taught himself to play the bandoneon.<sup>25</sup> Is it true or fictional? Who can tell?

However this autodidact aspect could explain that bandoneon playing in Argentina is so different from the European style.

In the beginning tango music was mainly an instrumental affair. There was some singing but not much. It usually was limited to the singing of refrains and the texts were rather simple and bawdy. The second generation in the twenties, the children of the immigrants, who often had more musical education, paid more attention to texts. The tango poets Enrique Santos Discepolo and Pascal Contursi provided tango with more mature lyrics, which were immortalized by Carlos Gardel and others.

### **Tango between the World Wars**

Just before the First World War the *orquesta típicas* started to replace the trio's and quarteto's, which had musically dominated the first decenia of tango. In the twenties and thirties this type of orchestra was standard in tango music.

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<sup>22</sup> Birkenstock & Ruegg, 1999. Also note that the year the bandoneon arrived in Buenos Aires probably preceded the year in which this instrument first was used in tango.

<sup>23</sup> Aslan, 1990.

<sup>24</sup> To what extent Heinrich Band can be called the inventor of the bandoneon is an issue still open for debate. Doktorski (1998) also names a few others, such as C.F. Uhlig, from Chemnitz and C. Zimmerman from Saxon.

<sup>25</sup> Sebastian & Labrana, 1998.

In 1911 Vincente Greco formed the first *orquesta típica criolla*, but the *criolla* tag was soon dropped. The *orquesta típica* formation consisted of piano, guitar, two or more violins, bass or cello and of course a pair of bandoneons.

The twenties and thirties showed a waning popularity for tango. This can be attributed to two factors. First of all, tango got more competition from other music or cultural phenomena, such as the talkies (talking movies), other Latin American music genres and jazz.

Another factor is the sophistication of tango music. There evolved a new type of tango, a more musically refined sort of tango that was quite hard to dance to. Aside the traditionalist stream in tango (Canaro, Firpo and De Angelis), there arose an evolutionary stream in tango (De Caro, Di Sarli and Troilo).<sup>26</sup> This ‘sophistication’ in tango music may well have been caused by the prospering economical period Argentina experienced in the twenties, which favoured a more elite cultural music scene.

The evolutionist school in tango, led by De Caro moved farther and farther away from the traditional dance music. Julio De Caro was a great musical innovator. He introduced in tango some new musical techniques, such as the use of polyrhythm and contrapuntal (the use of more than one rhythm at the same time without a loss of harmony), *rubato* (playing slightly around the rhythm) and *syncope* (the suddenly and unexpectedly dropping of an accent).<sup>27</sup>

Tango reached an impasse like state. At one side there were the traditionalists and at the other side the evolutionists (also known as the *decarean* school of tango). This impasse was ‘solved’ by Juan D’Arienzo. In 1935 he formed an orchestra that became an overnight sensation. His music was to give a new impulse to music as well dance. By playing strong rhythmically arrangements of tangos dating from the early days of tango, he was able to lure the dancers back to the dancehalls again. Right from the start he used faster tempos than was customary. This was a successful move that inspired other orchestra’s also to speed it up.

If we take Francisco Canaro as an example, we see that his tangos in the twenties usually have rhythms that are about or just below 60 beats per

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<sup>26</sup> Collier, Cooper, Azzi & Martin, 1995.

<sup>27</sup> Ferrer & Brave, 1989 en Willemze, 2000.

minute (BPM). In the thirties it climbs to about 65 BPM and in the forties it is around 68 BPM.

### **La epoca de oro**

The *orquesta tipica* was the dominant musical line up until the forties. In the eve of the Second World War a new type of tango *orquesta* appeared on stage: the *gran orquesta*. What big bands are to jazz, *gran orquesta* are to tango.

Just like big bands, *gran orquestas* consisted of musical sections, such as a section of violins, a section of bandoneons and so on. The *gran orquestas* owed their existence to the economical boom Argentina and the rest of the continent experienced. Argentina profited in a big way from the (looming) threat of war. The export of meat and grains to Great Britain made Argentina a very prosperous country. The saying ‘as rich as an Argentine’ dates from this period. The consequences for tango were enormous. *Orquestas* could employ more musicians, because there was so much money going around. Musical line-ups which more bandoneonists and violinists became a standard. Bigger formations automatically meant more musical possibilities. The music got more and more refined. Think about intertwining melodies. This development had already set in with Julio De Caro.

In the forties the tango *cantando* (sung tango) became more and more popular. Extremely well talented composers, arrangers and tango poets, aided the new generation of singers, such as Roberto Goyeneche, Francisco Fiorentino and Alberto Podesta. The most famous tango poets from this era are Enrique Santos Discepolo, Homero Manzi, Catulo Castillo, Homero Exposito and Enrique Cadicamo. They transformed tango lyrics from the traditional archetypal themes of love and disappointment to more ‘serious’ subjects like life and philosophy.<sup>28</sup>

The average tempo of tango music slowed down a bit so that towards the end of the *epoca de oro* the tempo was a little slower than ten years before.

A side effect of the economic prosperity in Argentina was that in the beginning of the forties the first real dance floors appeared. The “down to earth” *milonguero* style almost completely disappeared and was replaced by a more artistic way of dancing.

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<sup>28</sup> Aslan, 1990.

## **Intermezzo**

Musically the epoca de oro may have shown the greatest musical variety ever in tango's history. Each orquesta had its own characteristic sound or 'colour'. This colour of an orchestra was unique and clearly discernable from other orchestras. What factors contributed to the colour of an orchestra?

Aslan poses that, due to the lacking of a drum section, all the other instruments played a more or less important role in establishing the rhythmical structure. The basic four beat pattern of the tango (marcato) is the underlying theme in tango. Every tango orchestra had its own unique way of interpreting this basic pattern, which caused the different colours in tango music.<sup>29</sup>

## **Tango nuevo and what came next**

In the mid fifties the epoca de oro came to an end. After the tragic death of Eva Peron, Argentina met with both economic and political troubles. The thoughtlessly money spending political system lost its credit. In 1954 this regime was replaced by the military, which disliked anything Peron had been in favour of. Peron's propagation of nationalistic values (tango), made tango suspicious to them. And also the class tango originated in was suspect. The emergence of a worldwide youth culture (rock and roll and pop music) and idols like Elvis Presley, the Beatles and the Stones also played an important part in tango's downfall. The consequences for tango were dramatically.

Many orchestras quit or trimmed down the number of musicians. Music lost a lot of its finesse. Tango orchestras lost their place in the spotlights to the emerging youth idols. Tango became more and more a marginal phenomenon.

In this vacuum there was opportunity to modernize tango, a phenomenon usually called tango nuevo. Astor Piazzolla was the main innovating force of tango. He mixed elements of jazz (he grew up in New York) and classical music (he studied under tutelage of Nadia Boulanger) with tango.

When you compare Piazzolla's music from the early sixties with music dating from the epoca de oro (and even his own music from this period!), you cannot help wondering about what a revolutionary break he made with tango as it was. The contrast between the music, that was

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<sup>29</sup> Aslan, 1990.

composed specially for dancing (forties and fifties) and the complex symphonic music to listen to that Piazzolla composed, is striking.<sup>30</sup>

Many people were disgusted with the new tango. Piazzolla was called names and threatened regularly and there even have been some fistfights with members of traditional orchestra's.<sup>31</sup> It is only in the seventies that Piazzolla is generally accepted when he composed "Balada para un loco". He was also invited to play in the Teatro Colon, which is considered one of the greatest honours bestowed to a tango musician.

In the eighties tango experiences a worldwide revival. The dance show "Tango Argentino", musically supported by Sexteto Mayor, made a very successful tour through Europe and the United States of America. Also the tango musicians in Paris, driven from their fatherland by the military junta, gave a new impulse to tango. The music of the young guard of tango (Mosalini, Cedron, etc.) is inspired by tango nuevo as well as the music from the epoca de oro. They quite often use older compositions and rearrange them in a modern way and in doing so (in my opinion), it sounds more virtuoso but also less emotionally intense. The modernization of tango music caused the more or less 'fixed' tango line-up to disappear.

In modern tango orchestras there is a multitude of line-ups and also the most exotic instrumental combinations do occur. It seemed as if everything was possible and had to be tried at least once; anything goes as they used to say in jazz. Tango didn't differ from other twentieth century's dominant musical forms, such as blues, jazz rhythm and blues, rock and roll and pop music: tango also took part in the sixties and seventies in musical innovation, experiments and musical crossovers.

### **And now for something completely different**

At the beginning of the new millennium, there is sudden, completely new and unexpected 'sound' in tango music. Inspired by tango music (both nuevo and more traditional) and using all kinds of modern digital sound techniques (sampling and editing), neo tango surprises the tango scene with new and rhythmically energetic modern tango crossovers. In

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<sup>30</sup> As Piazzolla said himself: "For me, the tango was always for the ear rather than the feet. ... I was taking the old tango away from them. The old tango, the one they loved was dying. And they hated me." ((Dutorski, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Azzi & Collier, 2001.

2000 The Gotan Project released “La Revancha Del Tango”. Their success inspired a lot of other musicians. Within a few years there were dozens of tango fusion like bands active, such as Narcotango and Bajofondo Tangoclub.

Whether neo tango or tango fusion will be a permanent phenomenon in tango remains to be seen. However it does have a refreshing effect on tango and might function as an inspiration for future generations of tango musicians.

## 6 The voices of tango

### 1 Introduction

In my opinion a tango DJ should at least have some basic knowledge about the most well know singers of tango. In this chapter we will pay attention the most important voices of tango's history, like: Alberto Podesta, Raul Beron, Angel Vargas, Charlo, Roberto Chanel, Roberto Ruffino, Ada Falcon, Nelly Omar, Alberto Castillo en Tita Merello and many more.

Here you will find a short biography of each of the singers, the orchestras they joined, the role they performed and what their most memorable recordings are. The role of a singer in an orchestra can be contrasting or accentuating. Contrasting refers to a singer who clearly chooses different music lines than the orchestra offers; accentuating means when a singers supports the music lines an orchestra offers. Examples of contrasting singers in tango are: Adriana Varela and Carlos Gardel and examples of accentuating singers are: Castillo (candombes only) and Rufino.

Furthermore we attempt to describe a singer's voice: is it lyrical or rhythmical, is it energetic or melancholy?<sup>32</sup> We realise of course that this is a subjective activity, which is open for discussion.

And last (but certainly not least) we will discuss the relevance for tango DJ's: danceability versus undanceability.<sup>33</sup> Some singers have beautiful voices (for example: Carlos Gardel and Imperio Argentina), but they are hardly danceable.

In case of other artists danceability has to do with a music genre. Alberto Castillo's tango's are hardly danceable, but his candombes are an entirely different matter! When Castillo sings a candombe, his singing is rhythmically very supportive. So: good to dance to.

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<sup>32</sup> For the description of the voices of the singers we use the same categories as have been used to describe songs (chapter 6). We will also give a voice typing which is customary in classical music (opera): soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto / contra alto (for female voices) and countertenor (alto or mezzo), tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, bass (for male voices). For more info on *voice type*, see Wikipedia UK.

<sup>33</sup> The words danceability and undanceability are newly coined words. Danceability refers to whether a certain piece of music or singing is fit for dancing or not. Don't confuse danceability with dance ability (skills of a dancer).

A last remark on this: it is risky to talk about the danceability of a singer; the orchestra plays an equally important role in this. So feel free to disagree.

## **2 Cantores & cancionistas del tango**

In this chapter we present (in alphabetical order but without having the intention to be complete) the biographies of the most famous tango singers. Carlos Gardel and other great singers who dealt only with tango canciones will not be discussed here, because their relevance for a tango DJ is almost zero.

### **Francisco Amor (1906-1972)**

Amor was a multitalented person. Apart from singing, he played in movies, composed tangos (Mulita, Malambo and Cancion de junio) and also was a painter.

Amor played in Mario Scoffici's movie Viento Norte (1937), Pampo y Cielo (1938) and the documentary Buenos Aires Canta (1947), in which also Hugo Del Carril and Azucena Maizani appeared. When he got older and his singing ability deteriorated, he started a second career as a painter.

Amor started his professional singing career in 1935 with Florindo Sassone. After a few years he left Sassone to join Canaro, where he rose to great heights.

And although Canaro is generally regarded as a member of the traditional school in tango, he also did a lot to innovate tango music.<sup>34</sup> One of them was the introduction of two singers in his tango orchestra. This honour was bestowed on Francisco Amor and Roberto Maida. The use of two vocals enlarged the possibility to accentuate and support the melody of a song. After some time Maida left and was replaced by Ernesto Fama. The duo Amor – Fama became legendary.

After contractual disagreements with Canaro, Fama and Amor decided to start their own orchestra. The Amor – Fama orchestra made their debut in 1941 for Radio Splendid. After a tour through Uruguay they decided to disband their orchestra.

After this it got quiet around Amor. He hardly ever stood under the spotlights anymore. In 1956 Amor performed with Fama, Roldan and Adrian in the Radio El Mundo program El Glostora Tango Club, which

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<sup>34</sup> Collier, 1995: 198.

was hosted by Francisco Canaro. A year later he made some recordings for Antar /Telefunken with Piazzolla, Rivero and Salgan.

The most striking feature of Amor's voice is his criollo accent and his interpretational skills, which excel in his valeses.

### **Raúl Berón (1920-1982)**

Raul came from a very musical family, who all loved to sing. His sisters Elba (1930) and Rosa (1933) and his brother Jose (1918) all sang tango rioplatense. Raul however was to become by far the most famous.

With his brother Jose he made his debut in 1930. Raul became known to the general public, when he joined Calo's orchestra in 1939. During his time with Calo he made a lot of recordings. He was accompanied at Calo's orchestra by arranger Argentino Galva, violinist Enrique Mario Francini and pianist Osmar Maderna.

In 1942 his cooperation with Calo resulted in unforgettable records, such as *Al compás del corazón*, *El vals soñador*, *Entre sueños* and *Tristezas de la calle Corrientes*.

In 1943 Beron sang and acted in the movie *Toda un hombre*. In the same year he joined the Francini – Pontier orchestra. In 1949 Beron returned to Calo for a brief period. His cooperation with Calo resulted in some brilliant songs, such as *Azabache* (candombe), and *Al compas del corazon*.

In the beginning of the fifties he sang together with Jorge Casal at Troilo's orchestra. In 1957 Beron left Troilo. After this it becomes quiet around Raul Beron, although there is in 1963 a somewhat half-hearted and unsuccessful attempt to reunite Calo's orchestra from 1940 (with Francini, Pontier, Federico and Podesta).

Other orchestras in which Beron sang are Lucio Demare and Orlando Goni. Beron became known because of his interpretations of *La abandonada* and *no sabia* and (the DJ's favourite) *Que falta me haces*. Beron's voice can be described as velvety, warm and intimate; a voice suited for all moods of tango.

### **Alberto Castillo (1914-?)**

Alberto Castillo was born as Alberto Salvador De Lucca. He was a talented and intelligent man. Apart from singing he also played in movies and was trained as a gynaecologist. He didn't work as a doctor for a long period. When it became known that the famous, charming singer was a

gynaecologist, his practice was flooded by young female fans who wanted to be ‘examined’ by him. From this time on, he concentrated on his artistic career.

Castillo was already fascinated by music when he was a child. He learnt how to play violin and received singing lessons. When he was fifteen, he started to perform, thereby using several nicknames, because his father maintained a harsh discipline. In this time Castillo sang under names like Alberto Dual and Carlos Duval.

In 1934 he made his debut with Armando Neira and via Julio de Caro (1934) and Augusto Pedro Berto (1935), he landed in 1939 with dentist-pianist Ricardo Tanturi and Los Indios.<sup>35</sup> At this time he was still studying medicine. Tanturi meant a breakthrough for Castillo and together they made several dozens of recordings, of which the first (the valse *Recuerdo*) took place in 1941.

In 1943 Castillo splits with Tanturi to form his own orchestra, in which some prominent musicians take place: Pedro Laurenz (bandoneon) and Miguel Calo ((violin).

In this time Castillo decided to add *candombes* to his repertoire. With his first *candombe* *Charol* he was very successful in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo, which led to more *candombes*, like *Siga el Baile* and *Baile de los Morenos*.

In 1946 Castillo and his orchestra performed in the tango movie *Adios Pampa*. More movies were to follow for Castillo: *El tango vuelve a París* (1948), *Un tropezón cualquiera da en la vida* (1949), *Alma de Bohemio* (1949), *La barra de la esquina* (1950), *Buenos Aires, mi tierra querida* (1951), *Por cuatro días locos* (1953), *Ritmo, amor y picardía* (1955), *Música, alegría y amor* (1956), *Luces de candilejas* (1958) and *Nubes de humo* (1959)

Already at great age (in 1993) Castillo sang *Siga el Baile* with Los Autenticos Decadentes.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Augusto Pedro Berto (1889 – 1953) was an autodidact musician (guitar, mandolin, violin and bandoneon) from *la vieja garde del tango*. In 1913 he became famous with *Quinteto Criollo Augusto*. Berto composed *La Payanca*, *Belen*, *Sarmiento*, *Yvette* and *De Pura Yerba*. His style can be described as *tango primitivo*. Berto can also be seen as one of the founding fathers of tango, together with Angel Villoldo, Eduardo Arolas, Vincente Gerco and Juan “Pacho” Maglio.

<sup>36</sup> Los Autenticos Decadentes is a popular 12 man Argentine band, which was formed in 1986. Their style is a mix from *ska* and Latin American rhythms. They

Castillo has an unique voice which is easy to distinguish from others. His phrasing is immaculate. According to Castillo this was what dancers needed most and he also referred to himself as a bandoneon who sang. He often sang in a critical, mocking way about the upper class.

### **Roberto Chanel (1914-1972)**

Roberto Chanel was born as Alfredo Mazzochi Morsela and is best known from his singing with Pugliese and his lunfardo style of singing. Chanel was born in a musical family. His father was in Italian immigrant (from Naples), who brought his accordion with him. His three sons were taught to play guitar, which accompanied their singing. They regularly performed as a trio.

Chanel's singing career had a difficult start. He regularly participated in singing contests, where he regularly won prizes, but this didn't result in a contract with a tango orchestra. Finally he made his debut with El Cieguito Tarantino (father of pianist Osvaldo Tarantino) in the famous café Nacional. When in 1943 Mandarino and Gauthier left Pugliese, Don Osvaldo was looking for another singer. Some people suggested that the singer of the Tarantino orchestra, El Turco Mazzocchi, who at this occasion acquired the name Roberto Chanel.<sup>37</sup>

In the same year Pugliese made several recordings with Chanel as a singer. His most famous songs with Pugliese are Farol and Corrientes y Esmeralda. After some time he left Pugliese for Sassone's outfit, with whom he made several recordings for RCA Victor. Between 1944 and 1948 he also made numerous recordings for Odeon. In 1948 he left Sassone and formed his own orchestra, which was not to last for long.

### **Charlo (1905/6-1990)**

Charlo was born in La Pampa as Carlos Jose Perez and moved to Buenos Aires at a later stage.<sup>38</sup> Historians are not certain about his exact

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are also inspired by traditional music (canzonetta and murga). On their CD *Fiesta monstruo* (1993) Alberto Castillo sings *Siga el baile*.

<sup>37</sup> Chanel as his artist's name was suggested by the poet Julio Jorge Nelson (author of the tango *Margarita Gauthier*, 1943, music by Joaquín Mora), who apparently looked at an advertisement for Chanel perfume.

<sup>38</sup> About Charlo's original name of birth there is some confusion. Ludwig (2002) refers to Charlo as Carlos Jose Perez Urdnola. Others call him Carlos Jose Perez, sometimes with the suffix *De la Riestra* (which is probably made up by Charlo

date of birth. Charlo made his debut in the twenties, not so long after Gardel made his debut. Where Gardel chose guitars as accompanying instruments, Charlo chose for an orquesta típica. Charlo was accompanied at times by Canaro and Firpo (at the carnival in Rosario in mid twenties), Lomuto, Demare, Vardaro and Pugliese. With Canaro Charlo made some hundreds of recordings.

Apart from singing Charlo also played piano and acted as an singing actor in sainetes.<sup>39</sup> In 1924 Charlo started his career as a pianist and singer for Radio Cultura. Charlo was very fond of luxury and smart clothes (in which he also functioned as a trendsetter). Charlo certainly was a dandy, or a jailaife as the Argentines say.<sup>40</sup>

Charlo studied law for some time, but was eventually lured by tango. In 1935 Charlo's career as a movie star started with *El alma del bandoneón*, which was followed a year later by *Puerto Nuevo* (1936, director: Luis Cesar Amadori) and *Carnaval de antaño* (1940, Manuel Romero).

Besides singing and acting, Charlo also composed some famous tangos like *Tormento*, the milonga *Oro y plata* (with Homero Manzi), *Rondando tu esquina* (with Enrique Cadicamo) and *Torture* (with Catullo Castillo).

Charlo sang romantic. Charlo, who came from the rural area of Argentina, was also an instrumental factor in the evolution of the improvised payades towards the structured (fixed lyrics) of the thirties.

### **Carlos Dante (1906-1985)**

Carlos Dante Testori, as his complete name was, made his debut in 1927 with Francisco Pracanico. In this period he also sang with D'Arienzo, Aieta, Caló and Maffia. With D'Arienzo he made more than thirty recordings. In 1928 he tours through the south of Europe (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Greece) with Rafael Canaro. When in Rome he has a chance encounter with the famous opera baritone Tita Ruffo, who encourages him to remain true to his style of singing, because "tango has

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himself). In 1924 when he started to sing for 1924 Radio Cultura, he chose the name Charlo, which was inspired by the then immensely famous Charlie Chaplin.

<sup>39</sup> Sainete refers to a low one act comedy, with a vulgar character. Sainete porteno refers to the Argentinean (Buenos Aires) vulgar theatre.

<sup>40</sup> Jailaife is the corruption of the word high life, which stands for bourgeoisie and dandy like behavior.

to be said, it needs not shouting”, an advice which was obviously followed by Dante.

His tour with Rafael Canaro was originally planned for only six months, but due to its enormous success, was prolonged to almost three years. It was only in 1932 that Dante returns to Buenos Aires. For some time Dante doesn't sing, because he was offered a lucrative job with an executive company. After some time the call of tango proved to be too loud. In 1937 he joined Francisco Canaro.

From 1944 onwards there follows a successful cooperation with Alfredo de Angelis, when he is asked to replace Floreal Ruiz, who joined Troilo. Dante stayed for thirteen years (!) with De Angelis, in which he sang with Julio Martel and Oscar Larroca.

Dante's most famous recordings with De Angelis are: La brisa, Lunes, Soy un arlequín and Carnaval. Towards the end of his singing career Dante forms a (short-lived) orchestra with Larocca, before he decides to quit singing at the highpoint of his career.

### **Ada Falcón (1905-2002)**

Ada Falcon, who was nicknamed La Yoyita Argentina (the little jewel from Argentina) was besides one of the most famous singers of her time (thirties and forties) also a lyricist and composer. Ada Falcon was by far the most famous of the three singing Falcon sisters: Ada, Adelma and Amanda. She made her debut in 1916 as an estribilista in cafe Apollo. In 1925 she recorded her first songs. A lot of recordings were to follow in her relative short singing career. There were periods in her career that she recorded 15 songs in a month.

Falcon was of the talented generation of tango singers from the twenties which also consisted of Azucena Maizani, Rosita Quiroga, Mercedes Simone, Tita Merello and Tania. Within a few years she became one of the most requested singers, who could demand gigantic honoraria for her singing. In the thirties she sang with the orchestras of Osvaldo Fresedo and Francisco Canaro. In 1934 she performed in the movie *Idolos de la radio* (director: Eduardo Morera) with Ignacio Corsini, Dorita Davis, Tita Merello and Francisco Canaro.

The influence of her mother completely formed (or deformed) Ada Falcon's personality. She was determined that Ada should become a star. When she was five years old, she was put on stage, just like Shirley Temple. In this period she was nicknamed La Yoyita Argentina. She

never had a normal youth. She didn't attend school, because she was educated at home to become a famous singer and movie star. All through her career Falcon was a diva, who was arrogant and tolerated the attention she got with a condescending smile, but who was also rather *weltfremd* and timid.

Ada Falcon is most of all known from her cooperation with Francisco Canaro, with whom she made nearly two hundred recordings. It goes without saying that this cooperation was problematic from time to time. They felt attracted to each other. Ada Falcon wanted to marry Canaro, who was married at that time. When the financial consequences of his divorce became clear to Canaro, his gusto for marriage disappeared rather quickly. He would lose half of his immense estate to his wife, which was something the shrewd business man Canaro couldn't accept. When Canaro's wife threatened Falcon with a pistol, their cooperation was soon disbanded.

In 1942 Falcon quite suddenly announced her retirement from the stage, just like Greta Garbo, and withdrew herself from a public life and sought refuge as a novice in a Franciscan monastery near Cordoba.<sup>41</sup> After this she shunned all publicity. One can guess for reasons why she quit singing so early in her career: the unhappy love for Canaro, artist's burn out, etc.

Ada Falcon was a mezzo-soprano, with a clear voice. Most of her songs are tango canciones, which are (almost by definition) not really fit for dancing. Her cooperation with Canaro did however result in some unforgettable and danceable recordings, like the valse *Corazon de oro*.

### **Ernesto Famá (1908-1984)**

Fama made his debut as a professional singer in 1920 in Teatro Nacional. In 1928 he joined Fresedo's orchestra (where he replaced Sofia Bozan) and left for a long stay in Paris. Over the years a lot of tango musicians and singers visited Paris (which at time was the cultural centre of the world). To give just a few examples: Villoldo, Saborido, Alfredo Gobbi (senior) and his wife Flora Rodriguez, Osvaldo Fresedo, Francisco Canaro, Esposito and later Piazzolla stayed for some time in Paris.

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<sup>41</sup> After splitting up with **Francisco** Canaro, with whom she had a sentimental friendship, she decided to spend the rest of her life in a **Franciscan** monastery. Coincidence or not?

When Fama returned to Buenos Aires he recorded with Orquesta Típica Victor in the Victor studios. One of his most remarkable recordings from this period is Carrilón de la Mercedad.

In the beginning of the thirties (1930) Fama was part of Sexteto Típica Carlos di Sarli, which in contrast with the later di Sarli (after 1942) made rhythmical music.

The next stop in Fama's career was when he joined Canaro, where he reached the highpoint of his career. He stayed with Canaro until 1938 and made several recordings with him for Odeon.

In 1941 he formed the Orquesta Amor – Fama, from who apparently no recordings are left. Their cooperation didn't last long.

Despite his relatively short career Fama was a very productive singer. Mainly as an estribilista he made more than 300 recordings, of which circa 240 with Canaro's orchestra.

Apart from singing Fama also played in movies and did write and compose tangos. Other orchestra's in which he sang are: Orquesta Típica Porteña, Orquesta Típica Columbia, Juan Canaro and Alberto Gambino.

### **Francisco Fiorentino (1905-1955)**

Fiorentino, who was also called Fiore, became famous by his voice. He sang with some of the most famous tango orchestras, like Maffia, Canaro, D'Arienzo, Troilo and Piazzolla. What is not generally known is that Fiore also was a respected bandoneon player (with Canaro in 1928), conducted his own orchestra and composed tangos.

He got his training as a bandoneon player from Enrique Di Cicco. Later he joined Francisco Canaro's orchestra, where besides from bandoneon he also started to sing refrains (estribillista). In the middle of the twenties he formed his own orchestra, which was disbanded after some time.

At the beginning Fiorentino spent some time in Europe (Germany). When he returned to Buenos Aires he joined Roberto Zerrillo's orchestra and he also hosted a radio program for radio Belgrano and Radio Argentina.

With Zerrillo Fiorentino recorded in 1934 *Serenata de amor*, which was the first recording where a complete lyric was sung (instead of a refrain). By doing so Fiorentino was instrumental in the disappearing art of estribilistas and the rise of the orchestral singer, who claimed (and got) an equal role in an orchestra.

From 1937 till 1944 Fiorentino sang with Troilo. This is probably the highpoint of his career. Troilo's orchestra provided Fiorentino with a musical background an opportunity to marvel everybody who heard him.

Besides Canaro and Zerrillo Fiorentino also made recordings with Firpo, Maffia, D'Arienzo, Mancione and Basso.

After leaving Troilo his career stagnated. In 1951 Fiorentino moved to Uruguay where he joined the pianist José Adolfo Puglia and bandoneonist Edgardo Pedroza.

### **Raúl Iriate (1916-1982)**

Raul Iriate, born as Rafael Fiorentino, started his career as a refrain singer in the thirties in several radio programs, mostly accompanied by guitar. Forced by the popularity of Francisco Fiorentino, he chose as an artist's name Raul Iriate. In 1937 he made his debut with Enrique Forte, after which he became well known when he joined Miguel Caló's Orquesta de las Estrellas. When in 1943 Podesta left Caló for Di Sarli, Iriate was to replace him.

Caló's line up at the time when Iriate joined proves how well chosen the name Orquesta de las Estrellas was: Osmar Maderna (piano), Enrique Mario Francini, Aquiles Aguilar, Antonio Bogas and Mario Lalli (all violin), Domingo Federico, Armando Pontier, José Cambareri and Felipe Richiardi (all bandoneon) and Armando Caló (double bass).

In 1945 Caló's star orchestra was drained when Maderna, Federico, Francini and Pontier started their own orchestra's. Thanks to Iriate and Beron Caló managed to hold on to its quality.

In 1947 Iriate leaves Caló to pursue a solo career. In 1948 he makes his debut for Radio Belgrano, where he is accompanied by bandoneonist Ismael Spiltanik.

Iriate not only enjoyed a great popularity in Argentina but also in the rest of Latin America. In 1950, when the golden age of tango is already losing its colour, Iriate tours through Chili, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico and Colombia (where he finally settles down). In the mid fifties he makes another very successful tour through Latin America and Cuba.

A short time before the death of his old maestro Miguel Caló Iriate returns to Buenos Aires to make some recordings with Caló.

In his last years Iriate mainly concentrated on organizing tours for other artists and homage festivals for Carlos Gardel in Medellin, Columbia. Iriate sang baritone, with a pained undertone.

### **Oscar Larroca (1922-1976)**

Larrocca (real name: Oscar Antonio Moretta) started to play guitar at an early age. In his teens he also started to sing, which got him through some hard times.

In the early forties he performed for a few years for the daily radio show *La famosa matinée de Juan Manuel*.

In 1944/45 he sang with Domingo Federico's orchestra, where he recorded several dozens of songs. At Federico's he sings with Carlos Vidal.

In 1948 he leaves Federico when Manzi asks him to join his orchestra and sing with Roberto Ray. Together they make their debut at Radio Belgrano and are an instant success. Unfortunately Manzi's orchestra disintegrates at the end of 1949. After a short intermezzo with Roberto Calo he joins the orchestra of Alfredo De Angelis in 1951, with whom he rises to great heights.

The reason for joining De Angelis was Julio Martel's departure. Larrocca and Dante went along well and soon they make their debut at Radio El Mundo's *El Glostora Tango Club*. In the autumn of his career (1958) he forms his own orchestra with Carlos Dante. They toured quite successfully through Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. In 1959/60 however they decided to go their own ways. Tango by then suffered a crisis and North American music started to dominate the Argentinean music market. Opportunities for performances became less for Larrocca and Dante, so they decided to split up. Larrocca has a baritone voice.

### **Julio Martel (1923-?)**

Martel (whose real name was Julio Pedro Harispe) made his debut when he was still a minor with Giordano's orchestra, but his great fame he achieved while collaborating with Alfredo de Angelis, which lasted from 1943 to 1951.

In 1943 Martel auditioned for Alfredo de Angelis. It was at this occasion that his artist's name was launched by Nestor Rodi, who just happened to order a glass of Martel cognac. The same year Martel made his first

recording (Qué buena es) with de Angelis. As a soloist or together with Carlos Dante more than sixty recordings were to follow.

In 1946 Radio El Mundo invited Martel to sing in the radio program El Glostora Tango Club, which was broadcasted just before a popular soap.

Julio Martel also performed in several tango movies, such as El Cantor del Pueblo (1948) and El Idolo del Tango. In 1951/52 Martel left De Angelis to tour through Uruguay, where he also sang for radio and television programs. After living for several years in Colombia Martel returned to Buenos Aires, where he ended his career in 1959 and spent his time on his farm, enjoying his royalties.

Martel's voice can be described as a manly baritone. His cooperation with Dante is famous. Julio Martel's younger brother also sang (on several occasions with the De Angelis orchestra) and used the artist's name Lalo Martel.

### **Tita Merello (1904-?)**

Laura Ana Merello sang from a very early age, first in sainetes and later (from 1923 onwards) in cabarets. When still very young her mother abandoned her, which led to a life on the streets of Buenos Aires. Life on the street (hunger, criminality, poverty and prostitution) caused an enormous drive to live and become successful.

In fact when Merello sings, she sings about her own life. Although she was really material for a singer (difficulty in keeping pitch), the audience accepted and appreciated the emotions she put in her singing enormously.

In the early twenties Merello started to appear as a singer in revues and cabarets. She also played as an actress in theatre productions, like El rancho del herman (director: Claudio Martinez Paiva) and El convetillo del Paloma (director: Alberto Vacarezza).

In 1925 she made her debut as a tango singer. Her first recordings date from 1929. From 1932 she sang with Ernesto Ponzio's outfit and later on with Canaro's, with who she made countless recordings for Odeon. The highpoint of her theatre career was Eduardo de Filippo's Filomena Marturano, a play which had an uninterrupted run of two years and which was later filmed by Luis Mottura.

In the thirties her attention shifted towards the movies. She became a great actress in several tango orientated movies, like Tango (1933, direc-

tor: Luis Moglia Barth), *Idolas de la Radio* (1934) and *Asi es el Tango* (1937).<sup>42</sup> Her most famous movies date from a later period: *Arrabalera* (1950) and *Gaucho* (1953).

In 1954 she returns to the recording studio to sing with Francisco Canaro, which results in unforgettable songs like *Se dice de mí*, *Arrabalera* and *Niño bien*.

The revolution in 1955 complicated her life enormously, as it did with countless other artists, who were associated with the Peron regime. A few years later Merello moves to Mexico, where she played in the TV version of Eugene O'Neill's *Before Breakfast*.

When she returns to Buenos Aires the public has almost completely forgotten her, although she makes a few recordings in the sixties with Hector Varela and Carlos Figari.

Merello didn't have a voice of great quality; the register she was able to sing was fairly limited.

### **Nelly Omar (1911-?)**

Nilda Elvira Vattuone, which was Nelly Omar's original name, successfully auditioned at a folkloristic group *Cenizas del fogón* and made her debut for Radio Rividavia in 1924. In the early thirties she formed together with her sister Nelida a vocal duo, which mainly sang folk music (milongas, criollo songs and rancheras) for Radio Rividavia and Radio Mayo. In 1937 Omar wins the popularity poll which was organized by *Caras y Caretas* magazine. In 1942 she is honoured by the SADAIC with a medal and receives the honorary title *La voz dramática del tango*.<sup>43</sup>

In 1938 Omar is announced at a concert as *La Gardel con polleras*, the Gardel with a dress. This nickname, which Omar abhorred, will stick with her for a long time. In the following years she sang with other great vocalists like Libertad Lamarque and Agustin Magaldi. Despite her great fame Omar didn't make a great number of recordings. Female voices weren't very interesting for record companies, which can very well be caused by the poor recording techniques of that time. The high

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<sup>42</sup> The movie *Tango* (19330) was the first Argentine talking movie (talkie). In this movie Merello sings with Merello Maizani, Lamarque and Simone and was accompanied by the orchestras of Maffia, Fresedo, Donato and De Dios Filiberto.

<sup>43</sup> SADAIC is an acronym for Sociedad Argentina de Autores y Compositores de Música. SADAIC is a union for musicians and composers, which was founded in 1955 by Francisco Canaro and others.

registers (more than 4-6 kHz were very hard to record, which caused many female voices to sound rather harsh.

At the beginning of the forties Omar stars in two movies: *Canto de amor* (1940) en *Melodías de América* (1942). In 1946 Omar joins Canaro's orchestra, which results in some great recordings for Odeon, such as *Desde el Alma en Nobleza de Arrabal*, *Adiós pampa mía*, *Canción desesperada en Sentimiento gaucho*.

When in 1955 the Peron regime is overthrown by *Revolución Libertadora*, Nelly Omar becomes a *persona non grata*. Although she claimed not to be politically involved, she felt great sympathies for Evita and Juan Peron and did perform on their propagandistic parties.

Like so many other tango artists she tries her luck in other Latin America countries, like Uruguay and Venezuela. With little luck however, and the public attention she receives diminishes over the years. At the end of the seventies Omar makes some recordings with Roberto Grella and in 1997 (at the age of 86) she records a CD. Her voice still sounded young and her phrasing is immaculate.

### **Alberto Podestá (1924-?)**

If you start to look for info on Alberto Podesta, you will find that there is more than one Podesta: Antonio Domingo Podestá Torterolo, Maria Esther Podestá del Pomar and Martin Podestá. And there was also at the end of nineteenth century a circus with acrobats led by the brothers Podesta. In Podesta's circus folkloristic music played an important role.<sup>44</sup>

If they are related with Alberto Podesta is vague, but not very likely. For certain, however, is that he stems from a musical family with a long lineage of artists.

Podesta made his debut in the thirties at Radio Emisora. After some odd jobs, he was invited in 1939 by Roberto Calo to join Miguel Calo's *Orquesta de las Estrellas*. There he meets Armando Pontier and Enrique Mario Francini, who become friends for life. His first recordings with Calo are made under another name: Juan Carlos Morel, because there are already other artists with the surname Podesta. When he joins Carlos Di Sarli in 1942, *el señor del tango* advises him to call himself Alberto Podesta, because Di Sarli is (correctly) convinced that he will overshadow all the other Podesta's. Next year Podesta left to join Pedro

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<sup>44</sup> See Chasteen (2004:54).

Laurenz's orchestra. In 1945 he teamed up with his friends Francini and Pontier.

In 1955 Podesta made a long tour through Colombia. After his return to Buenos Aires, Podesta did some performances in theatre and on television, but he gradually drops from sight.

The list of song Podesta made famous is sheer endless. For example, with Calo he sang *Que falta me haces*, with Di Sarli *Al compás del corazón*, with Laurenz *Alma de Bohemio* and with Francini – Pontier *El milagro*. Podesta never sang with Troilo, although there have been some contact between the two.

### **Roberto Ray (1912-1960)**

Roberto Ray (real name: Roberto Raimondo) started to sing when he was still in high school, which resulted in his nickname *el alummo canto* (the singing student). Ray made his debut in Cafe Angora. In 1932 he made his debut as an *estribilista* with Francisco Canaro. After this Ray sang with Fresedo, with whom he recorded for Victor and Columbia. In 1939 he left Fresedo to start his own orchestra with lyricist, composer and bandleader José María Rizzuti.

In 1948 Ray returns tot Osvaldo Fresedo. Roberto Ray's star rose in the period that the *estribillista* made place for the orchestral singer. The *estribillista* had always taken a second place to the musicians. When time passed the singers got more and a more important function in the orchestra. The audience began to show an increasing interest in the singers and what they sang. The record companies noticed this and gave the public what it wanted. Another accidental fact is that in the thirties and forties a lot of fantastic singers appeared on stage who claimed, deserved and got more artistic freedom. Also the lyrics of this period were great. All the conditions for the rise of the orchestral singers were present.

Ray's greatest hits were *Sollozos*, *Aromas*, *Niebla del Riachuelo* and of course, the unforgettable *Vida mía*. Ray was a tenor, with an excellent diction.<sup>45</sup>

### **Carlos Roldán (1913-1973)**

Carlos Roldán (real name Carlos Belarmino Porcal) already showed an interest for singing when he was a child. When he was still young, he

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<sup>45</sup> Diction is (according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary) the manner of enunciation (pronunciation) in singing.

sang (in short pants) the refrains in Américo Pioli's orchestra. Radio América asked to sing in 1932. A year later he started to sing with Los Ceibos for Radio Oriental.

In the years to follow Roldan travelled Argentina (with Buenos Aires as his home base) and Montevideo. In 1936 and 1937 he sang for Radio Fenix and Radio Belgrano. In 1938 he sang a duet with Mercedes Simone, in which they were accompanied by the Pedro Maffia orchestra. He was on his way to fame.

In 1939 Roldan excels in the radio series El Tango Del Oro, which is organised by Radio Belgrano. He is musically accompanied by Roberto Zerrillo and Roberto Firpo. When in 1941 Ernesto Fama and Francisco Amor leave Canaro's outfit, Canaro chooses Roldan and Eduardo Adrian as his new singers. In 1943 they record the unforgettable Sonar Y Nada Mas, a must for every tango DJ. Other great hits of Roldan are the milongas La Milonga De Mis Perros and Soy un porteño. Also Carlos Roldan's candombes are interesting for tango DJ's.

Until 1945 Roldan sang with Francisco Canaro. This period is Roldan's highpoint in his career. He leaves Canaro to form his own orchestra with pianist José Pascual, a cooperation which didn't last long.

From 1945 to 1949 Roldan resides in Montevideo, where he performs with Emilio Pellejero. In 1949 Rotundo asks him to return to Buenos Aires. In the fifties he does perform with Roberto Caló (1952/1953) and Miguel Caló (1956).<sup>46</sup> Carlos Roldan had a dark timbered voice.

### **Roberto Rufino (1922-1999)**

In 1937 Rufino made his debut as an estribillista (a singer who only sings refrains and not complete songs) with Orquesta Tipica Antonio Boavena. Because of his young age, Rufino is nicknamed el pibe del Albaseto (the kid from Albaseto). Next year he is discovered by Carlos Gary, who is Carlos Di Sarli's agent. From 1939 he sings (with a few interruptions) for Carlos Di Sarli, with whom he records numerous songs for Victor. At a young age he can already boast of a respectable number of recordings he made. In 1949 Rufino join Francini – Pontier and later Calo and Anibal Troilo (1964).

Undoubtedly Rufino's best years were with Di Sarli, Calo and Francini – Pontier. His recordings with Francini – Pontier are not so good dance-

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<sup>46</sup> Roberto and Miguel Caló are brothers. The Caló family is a musical one, because also their other brothers Juan, Salvador, Antonio and Armando are musicians.

able (too complex), but this has nothing to do with his singing. His recordings with Troilo in the early sixties are also not very interesting for dancers (the singing and the music was rather theatrical). Other more or less well known orchestras Rufino participated in are "Cieguito" Camilo Tarantini, José "Natalín" Felipetti, Anselmo Aieta, Francisco Rosse, Roberto Calo, Alfredo Fanuele (1941), Emilio Orlando (1942) and Raul Garello.

Under the artist's name Bobby Terré, Rufino sang masked for an audience. This episode of his career wasn't very successful however. Although his voice deteriorated and his memory failed him sometimes, Rufino kept performing until his death. Sometimes his audience had to prompt the lyrics. A few years before he died in 1999, Rufino was granted the title of honorary citizen of Buenos Aires.

Rufino's singing can be characterized as storytelling, with perfect phrasing and interpretation, a singer who knew very well what he was singing.<sup>47</sup> Besides singing Rufino also composed some songs, such as Boliche, Novio del suburbio, Destino de flor, El bazar de los juguetes and Manos adoradas.

### **Floreal Ruiz (1916-1978)**

Ruiz made his debut in 1936 on Radio Prieto and switched to the also in Buenos Aires based Radio Argentina. He is generally recognized as one of the best (if not the best) singers from la época de oro. He sang with some of the most famous orchestra's of his time: De Angelis, Troilo en Rotundo.

It did take however some time for him to achieve fame, which is not surprising for he had the tremendous task to replace Fiorentino at Troilo's orchestra. Besides that, the forties was an period of harsh competition between a lot of excellent singers.

Floreal Ruiz was the son of an anarchist, who kicked him out of his house, because he didn't tolerate a singer under his roof. Years later, when Ruiz had become famous, father and son were reconciled.

In 1938 Ruiz sang (under the name Fabián Conde) with Jose Otero's orchestra, with whom he also made some recordings. In 1943 Ruiz joined Alfredo de Angelis and his orchestra. With De Angelis he recorded some songs, of which Marionetta is the most widely known.

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<sup>47</sup> Phrasing refers to perform a composition in such a way that the structure and the rhythm are clearly shown.

In 1944 Troilo contracted Ruiz (on request of Alberto Marino), which resulted in some of tango history's finest recordings: *Naranja en flor*, *Flor de lino* and *Romance de barrio*. In 1948 Ruiz left Troilo for Rotundo, who made him a better financial offer. In 1955 he switched to Jose Basso.

In the sixties, when the golden age of tango had become history, Ruiz does make a few dozens of recordings with Jorge Dragone, Luis Stazo, Osvaldo Requena and the Raúl Garelo led Orquesta Típica Porteña. Although Ruiz's voice stayed intact until the end (which is remarkable) these recordings can't match his recordings with De Angelis and Troilo. Floreal Ruiz was a subtle singer with an excellent but also dramatic way of phrasing the lyrics he sang.

### **Angel Vargas (1904-1959)**

Angel Vargas (real name: José Angel Lomio Michelli) became famous when singing for Angel D'Agostino. The recordings of the two Angel's are superb. His career started in the early thirties. After singing in bars and movie theatres in the neighbourhood he lived in, he made his official debut in 1932 with the Lando – Matino orchestra in Cafe Marzotto. Under the name Carlos Vargas he made his debut with Augusto Pedro Berto. In 1932 he meets D'Agostino and sings with him a few times. In 1938 he sings as an estribillista with Orquesta Típica Victor.<sup>48</sup>

In 1940 the Vargas and D'Agostino renew their musical friendship. Vargas will sing with the D'Agostino outfit until 1946. This will be the best period in his career, which results in almost hundred recordings.

In 1946 Vargas forms his own orchestra which is alternately led by the bandoneonist Eduardo del Piano, Edelmiro D'Amario, Luis Stazo en José Libertella and pianist Armando Lacava. Angel Vargas can be described as an orchestral singer, who fitted perfectly in whatever orchestra he sang. Together with the tandem Troilo – Fiorentino the duo D'Agostino – Vargas can be ranked as the top of the golden age of tango.

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<sup>48</sup> In the thirties and forties most of the record companies had their own studio orchestra. Besides Orquesta Típica Victor there were also Orquesta Típica Brunswick, Quinteto Criolla Atlanta, Orquesta Típica Columbia and many others. The record labels Victor, Odeon and Columbia were the leaders in the market, but there were also numerous small record labels.

### 3 Observations & conclusions

While studying the singers I just described some things struck me.

#### Francisco Canaro as a key figure

Remarkably many singers sang at one time or other with Francisco Canaro's orchestra. Of course this has to do with Canaro's long span of musical activity from 1916 till 1965?, but also Canaro's intuitive feeling for what the public wanted made sure he contracted the best singers of his time.<sup>49</sup> The list of singers who sang with Canaro is sheer endless: Carlos Gardel, Agustin Magaldi, Ignacio Corsini, Alberto Castillo, Charlo, Edmundo Rivero, Hugo Del Carril, Jorge Vidal, Oscar Alonso, Alberto Marino, Horacio Deval, Angel Vargas, Guillermo Rico, Carlos Lombardi, Carlos Roldan, Eduardo Adrian, Alberto Gomez en Hector Maure (all male singers) en Libertad Lamarque, Ada Falcon, Mercedes Simone, Rosita Quiroga, Nelly Omar, Sofia Bozan, Tita Merello, Tania, Chola Luna, Carmen Duval, Carmen Del Moral en Maria De La Fuente (all female singers).

#### Tango families

Quite often tango was a family affair. The Canaro family is perhaps the most widely known example, but there are more examples.

Adolfo Pugliese was the father of Osvaldo and Alberto Pugliese. Father Adolfo (flute) formed with pianist Luis Suarez Campos an instrumental group, which performed in the then famous restaurant Hansen.<sup>50 51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> It is not surprising that Francisco Canaro is one of the most important key figures in (traditional) tango. He was a very smart businessman, who (with the help of his four brothers Rafael, Juan, Humberto and Mario) managed to build up a family tango empire (music and movies). Furthermore Francisco Canaro's role in founding the SADAIC (Sociedad Argentina de Autores y Compositores de Música) was enormous.

<sup>50</sup> Restaurant Hansen or Lo de Hansen in the barrio Palermo was an important place in the early history of tango. It was a mixture between a restaurant, a dance-hall and a brothel. Juan Hansen started Hansen in 1875 or 1877. Hansen meant expensive eating and dancing in a discrete environment. In 1912 Lo de Hansen had to make way for a railroad. Some of the most famous tango artists from la vieja guardia del tango performed in Hansen; for example: Rosendo Mendizabel (El Enterriano) and later Roberto Firpo.

Brother Alberto played with Juan Maglio, Agisilao Ferrazzano and Roberto Firpo. Osvaldo Pugliese's daughter Beba is the third generation of this musical family.

Furthermore there were the sisters Ada, Adelma and Amanda Falcon, father Alfredo de Angelis and daughter Gigi, the brothers Julio and Lalo Martel, the sisters Nilda Elvira (Nelly) and Nelida Omar and father and son Alfredo Gobbi.

### **Long careers**

Not only Canaro had a very long musical career. He made his debut in 1906 with a trio and his first recordings are from 1916. Until his death in 1964 he was active in music.

There are quite a lot of well known tango musicians who were active for forty years or more. Osvaldo Pugliese, Astor Piazzolla and Charlo are just a few examples of forty years or more in tango.

Osvaldo Pugliese made his debut in 1924 with Paquita Bernardo's Orquesta Tipica. Bernardo was the first female bandoneonista. Unfortunately no recordings of Bernardo were made. Pugliese performed until his death in 1995.

Astor Piazzolla career started in 1931 in New York when he met Carlos Gardel. In the same year they performed together and Piazzolla played a brief role in Gardel's movie *El Dia Que Me Quieras*. Piazzolla was invited by Gardel to join him on his 1935 tour through Latin America, because Piazzolla's father thought he was too young for that. This was the tour where Gardel died in a plane crash in Medellin. Piazzolla was musically active until he suffered a stroke in 1990, which left him in an irreversible coma.

Charlo's singing career started in 1924 and lasted till the end of the seventies.

### **Payador, estribillista, cantor**

Most of the singers we dealt with started their career as an estribillista (a singer of refrains) and worked their way up to the more prominent role of the orchestral singer (cantor). In the history of tango the role of the singer underwent some tremendous changes. This could very well be

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<sup>51</sup> Adolfo (father) composed some 'primitive' tangos and vales (*Mi Amor*, *Portenita* and *Recuerdos*), which were later interpreted by his son Osvaldo.

caused by the ‘standardization’ of tango argentino in the twentieth century.

Roughly you can distinguish three types of tango singers: payador, estribillista and cantor. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century the call of Buenos Aires was loud. Many payadores, gaucho and other rural workers took to the big city to make a fortune. They brought their rural culture with them and over time adapted it to the urban culture, and by doing so influence the urban culture.

At first the singing was not considered to be very important. Many tangos were without lyrics and if there were lyrics it were mostly refrains with rather vulgar lyrics of an improvisational character.

In the first decades of the twentieth century tango’s structure gets more and more standardized. The more or less loosely operating amateuristic duo’s and trio’s expand to (semi)professional orquesta típica’s. With this the free improvising character of tango music and lyrics faded away. Lyrics are put to paper in a refrain format and sung at the end of a song mostly.

With *Mi Noche Triste* Gardel started the tango canción genre. After this the orchestra singer, who sang ‘complete’ lyrics instead of refrains, slowly took the place of the estribillistas. The role of the singer was recognized in the orchestra as an equal to the other instruments. And by doing so the singer got more artistic freedom.

## **Nicknames**

A lot of tango artists (musicians and singers) didn’t perform under their own name. The list of aliases and nicknames is very long. Why all these nicknames and aliases?

There are several explanations for this phenomenon:

- the original names are too long or too complicated (difficult to remember or too hard to pronounce)
- on arriving in Buenos Aires as immigrants a lot of names are misspelled or shortened by the immigration services. Canaro was short for Canarazano.
- it is normal for artists to have an artist’s name. The role of Hollywood stars changing their names is clear.
- tango was seen by many as ‘a reptile from the brothels’ and therefore as something a civilised person didn’t want to be involved with. To pro-

tect their own reputation (and their family's of course) many tango artists sang under another name. Some of them came out of the closet when they were very well known, but also many didn't.

### **The new media: radio and the movies**

Many singers and musicians didn't confine themselves to just one form of art or only one medium of communication. They sang for radio but also live, played in movies, composed songs and wrote lyrics for the songs. Many singers started their careers at the radio, which was in the thirties one of the most important medias. When asked if tango would have been so popular without radio and movie, the answer is: most likely not.

In the forties tango was immensely popular. Radio executive were eager to include tango orchestras in their programs. Radio El Mundo was the radio station to start the tango program Ronda de Ases, which was aired from Teatro Casino. A lot of great names appeared on this show: Tanturi with Castillo, D'Agostino with Vargas, Di Sarli with Rufino, D'Arienzo with Mauré, Fresedo with Serpa and Troilo with Fiorentino.

In 1946 Radio El Mundo launched a new tango program: El Glostora Tango Club. The Glostora company sponsored this program to promote their hair gel. In the 15 minute daily program, which was aired continuously for 22 years a vast array of the greatest from tango history appeared: Francisco Canaro, Ricardo Tanturi, Miguel Caló, Juan D'Arienzo, Armando Pontier, Alfredo Gobbi, Enrique Mario Francini, Rodolfo Biagi, Osvaldo Pugliese and Donato Racciatti.

When radio was being replaced by television in the sixties and tango's heydays were over, El Glostora Tango Club was stopped.

### **The end of la epoca de oro**

In the early fifties la epoca de oro, the golden age of tango neared its end. The popularity of tango melted like ice on a hot summer day. This was caused by the economic situation, the political instability and the youth culture.

Artists deal in different ways with this fading away popularity. Some orchestras disbanded and pursued other careers. Others, like Alberto Podesta, Libertad Lamarque, Nelly Omar, Francisco Fiorentino, Julio Martel and Raul Iriarte, decide to shift their focus of attention to other countries in Latin America who were less intensive orientated to western

culture (Argentina is and was by far the most 'European' country in Latin America) or tried to adapt themselves to the changing musical taste in Argentina.

### **Unsuccessful spin offs**

Although the golden age of tango contained an immense and almost incredible accumulation of musical talents, not all initiatives were successful. Some of the great singers decided at one time or other to go solo, which was often resulted in a failure or wasn't the success they had hoped for.

Francisco Amor and Ernesto Fama, Roberto Chanel, Carlos Dante and Oscar Larroca, Francisco Fiorentino, Roberto Ray, Carlos Roldan and Angel Vargas were all great singers, but met with little success when they formed their own orchestras, which (in most situations) didn't last for very long.

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## 7 Classification of tango music

There is so much tango music and music to dance tango to, that it is easy to loose yourself in it. As a DJ you will need a system to categorize music. In El Corte we use the following classification criteria:

- Instrumental & vocal
- Rhythmical & lyrical
- Slow & fast
- Energetic & melancholy
- Regular/simple & irregular/complex
- Old & modern

### **Instrumental & vocal**

Some tangos are music without singing. Other tangos contain also singing, where music accompanies the singing. Tangos without singing are instrumental, tangos with singing are vocal tangos or tango cantando's.

Some dancers flatly refuse to dance to tango cantando's. This depends of course on the way a singer sings. Singing which is integrated into the music will meet less opposition than too demonstrative singing, which only uses music as a background. Too demonstrative singing can be fun for a special occasion, but it soon will irritate the dancers. Whatever you do as a DJ, it is always wise to alternate (series of) instrumental tangos with (series of) sung tangos.

### **Rhythmical & lyrical<sup>52</sup>**

Nearly all music is rhythmical and tango music certainly is no exception to this rule. Some musical songs however are clearly more rhythmical than others or at least the rhythm is more obvious.<sup>53</sup> Rhythmical music is music in which the musicians clearly accentuate the music.

For dancers it is clear when to make the next step. Especially beginning dancers are fond of rhythmical music. D'Arienzo is super rhythmical,

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<sup>52</sup> When I combined the dichotomies rhythmical – lyrical and energetic - melancholy, you will find that 54% is rhythmical and energetical, 31% is lyrical and melancholy, 11% is lyrical and energetical and 4% is rhythmical and melancholy. Clearly there is a relationship between rhythmical and energetical on one side and lyrical and melancholy on the other side.

<sup>53</sup> Lyrical can also be labeled as melodious or latent rhythmical (as opposed to dominant rhythmical).

just listen to his versions of Eduardo Arolas' *Drecho Viejo* or Enrique Delfino's *Re Fa Si* and you know what rhythmical means.

Lyrical music is music with a less clearly accentuated pattern. The musical theme in lyrical music is more relaxed, more freely interpreted. Lyrical music is harder to dance to, but poses more challenges to be creative. One of the best examples of lyrical music is Carlos Di Sarli after 1942. His version of *Verdemar* is a good example of lyrical music. The rhythm is hidden behind lyrical music lines and romantic lyrics by Roberto Rufino.

On deciding whether music is rhythmical or lyrical, just ask yourself if the melody or the rhythm is dominant. If the melody is dominant, a song is lyrical.

### **Energetic & melancholy**

Energetic music is music with a drive in it, it 'pushes' you in a direction. Melancholy music lacks this drive completely, so that it 'pulls' you in a direction. In the beginning of a salon, at least the first two or three hours, the accent will lie at the energetic music. After that melancholy music can be played more often. Too much melancholy music will make people feel depressed. In my opinion at least 70 to 80 percent of the music in a salon should be energetic.

Energetic music is music which gives you 'dancing energy', is something you can find in Osvaldo Pugliese's oeuvre: *La Yumba* is raw energy. The king of melancholy is probable Carlos Gardel. Listen to *Volver* and weep, then you will know what melancholy means.

On deciding whether music is energetic or melancholy, just ask yourself if a song is 'energizing' or 'energy consuming'.

### **Slow & fast**

The beats per minute (BPM) or tempo determines whether a piece of music is slow or fast. Pieces of music with less than a certain BPM can be considered slow, etc. Any division of what is fast, medium or slow is arbitrary. You might use the following limits, but it is only a suggestion.

Type/rhythm	Slow	Medium	Fast
Tango	< 60	60 – 70	> 70
Milonga	< 85	85- 110	> 110
Valse	< 70	70 – 80	> 80
Specials	< 60	60 – 70	> 70

A DJ program for computers/laptops usually does possess a BPM facility. If not or if you use CD's, then you can use your intuition or use a watch and count.

While DJ-in always realize that too slow or too fast music eventually will result in an empty floor. Too slow means that dancers can not get rid of their energy and become frustrated, too fast means they will use up their energy too soon and are no good for the rest of the salon, which will also leave them frustrated. Most of the music you will play should be a normal, medium rhythm. Occasionally you can play fast or slow songs.

Slow and fast pieces of music can be used to induce another 'atmosphere'. Sometimes you will have to temper the enthusiasm of the dancers otherwise it will get hectic on the floor. A tanda of slow music can do the trick. Vice versa is also a possibility. Some times, when it all gets to sleepy, you can spice it up the lot by playing a faster tanda.

Fresedo's music is generally quite slow. His tempo seldom reaches the 60 BPM. If you listen to Vida Mia, you realise this slow music. On the other hand Donato Racciatti's tangos are usually quite up tempo, listen to his version of R.I. Brignolo's Chique.

### **Regular & irregular**

Regular music is music with a fixed rhythm and a simple theme, which repeats itself. By far the most of tango music you hear in a salon is simple, regular music. Most dancers (but especially beginners) appreciate this simplicity, for most of the dancers don't dance to the music but to the beat. They love it for its predictability.

There are also orchestras, who love to play with the rhythms and use several themes in their music. The result is that their music is irregular and complex, for most dancers it will soon be too complex. Experienced dancers love to play while dancing to this music, but remember that a

tanda of 3 complex tangos is already quite tricky. The emphasis in a salon should be placed on simple, regular music.

The king of rhythm is Juan D'Arienzo. His El Choclo versions (Angel Viloldo) is the most regular music I know. One of the best examples of irregular or complex music is Julio De Caro. Listen to Floras Negras and you will realize how complex and irregular this music is. His music was so complex and irregular that it was and still is considered hardly 'danceable' at all.

### **Old & modern**

Since the early fifties tango has lost much of its popularity to the emerging rock and roll, rhythm and blues and pop, which heralded the era of the youth culture.

A lot of tango orchestras folded, were lost in anonymity or continued their activities with a more condensed line up. In the fifties tango went underground, only to make a (modest) comeback in the eighties. To draw the line between old and modern tango music is risky, but it is certain that the fifties meant a distinctive trend break.

However before and during the fifties there also were musicians who innovated tango (Gobbi, De Caro & Piazzolla) and in the sixties the retro tango orchestra of Miguel Villasboas produced music, which reminded of the thirties.

### **Conclusion, discussion and hints**

So we offered you a system to label your music collection with.

When you start labeling your music, you will encounter several difficulties;

- some dichotomies are subjective. Whether a song is energetic or melancholy, is a matter of taste.
- some dichotomies are continuous. It is hard to tell where to draw the line between rhythmical and lyrical. There will always be songs which can go either way.

Apart from these two problems, what to do with Alfredo de Angelis? His music seems to be neither rhythmical nor lyrical and also neither energetic nor melancholy. This is clearly a problem, but also offers you an opportunity. How about using Alfredo de Angelis' music as a neutral reference point?

Labeling your music is a process that will take a lot of time and energy, but it is worth it, because it makes your DJ-life easier.

But what does the categorization of tango music mean in reality?

We suggest some guidelines to you, but feel free to digress from them:

- Don't play too much sung tangos in a row, and certainly not more than three tanda's. Also within a tanda you can mix instrumentals with sung tangos.
- Start a salon with playing a lot of rhythmical and energetic music from the well known orchestra from the epoca de oro. Later you can also play some lyrical and melancholy music. But be careful with melancholy music; too much will depress the audience.
- Do not always play music with the same rhythm or energy. Even in a tanda it is no problem to play music with a rising beat/energy.
- Play mostly simple and regular tango and only incidentally a complex tango as a special.
- Most of the music you will play should be traditional/old music: 10% to 15% modern and special music is already quite a lot. Thematic salons (neotango, etc.) are a different story.
- For starters we offer a rudimentary categorization. The rest you will have to find out yourself!

## **Orchestral typing**

If you attach the labels (we discussed in this chapter) to individual songs, the next step might be (but methodological unsound) to try to make a typology of the orchestras.

For this I only use the following categories

- lyrical – rhythmic (L – R)
- melancholy – energetic (M – E)
- simple – complex (C)

In the matrix below we will (try to) discern whether an orchestra's whole oeuvre (or partial oeuvre) is rhythmical or lyrical, melancholy or energetic and what the complexity of the music is.

It goes without saying that this is a rather subjective activity, which you can disagree with.

The values we use are: neutral (0), low (+), medium (++) and high (+++).

In doing so every orchestra can be scored in 7 classes: highly rhythmical, medium rhythmical, low rhythmical, neutral, low lyrical, medium lyrical and highly lyrical. For energeticity (energetic versus melancholy) the same applies.

For complexity there are only three classes: complex (+), neither complex, nor simple (0) and simple (-).

<b>Orchestra</b>	<b>Rhythmicality</b>	<b>Energeticity</b>	<b>Complexity</b>
De Angelis, Alfredo	0	0	-
Biagi, Rodolfo	R++	E++	+
Bianco, Eduardo	R+	E+	-
Buzon, Manuel	R+	E++	-
Calo, Miguel	R+	E++	0
Canaro, Francisco	R+	E++	-
Carabelli, Alfredo	R+	E+	0
De Caro, Julio	L+	M+	+
Castillo, Alberto	L+	M+	0
Charlo	L++	M++	0
Color Tango	R++	E+	0
D'Agostino, Angel	R+	E+	-
D'Arienzo, Juan	R+++	E+++	-
Demare, Lucio	R++	E++	0
Di Sarli, Carlos (after 1942)	L++	E++	0
De Dios Filliberto, Juan	L++	M+	0
Donato, Edgardo	R++	E++	-
Esposito, Genaro 'Tano'	R+	E+	0
Federico, Domingo	R++	E++	0
Firpo, Roberto	R++	E++	0

<b>Orchestra</b>	<b>Rhythmi- cality</b>	<b>Energe- tality</b>	<b>Complex- ity</b>
Francini – Pontier	L++	M+	+
Fresedo, Osvaldo	L++	M+	0
Garcia, Jose	R++	E+	0
Gobbi, Alfredo	R+	E+	0
Lamarque, Libertad	L++	M+++	+
Laurenz, Pedro	R++	E++	0
Lomuto, Francisco	R+	E+	0
Maderna, Osmar	L+	E+	+
Maglio, Juan	R+	E+	0
Malerba, Ricardo	R++	E++	0
Mora, Enrique	R++	E++	0
Omar, Nelly	R++	E+	+
Orquesta Tipica Brunswick	R+	E+	0
Orquesta Tipica Victor	R+	E+	0
Piazzolla, Astor (before 1954)	L+	E+	+
Pugliese, Osvaldo	R++	E+++	+
Quinteto Pirincho	R++	E++	0
Racciatti, Donato	R++	E++	0
Rodriguez, Enrique (tradi.)	R++	E+	0
Rodriguez, Enrique (funny)	R++	E++	+
Rotundo, Francisco	R++	E++	0
Sassone, Florindo	R+	M+	0
Sexteto Mayor	R++	E++	0
Simone, Mercedes	L++	M+++	+
Tanturi, Ricardo	L+	E+	0
Troilo, Anibal	R++	E++	0
Villasboas, Miguel	R++	E++	0

If you summarize the scores of the different orchestra you will get the next matrix as an result.

<b>Highly lyrical/ Highly melancholy</b>	<b>Medium lyrical</b> Lamarque, Simone	<b>Low lyrical</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Low rhythmic</b>	<b>Medium rhythmic</b>	<b>Highly rhythmic</b>
<b>Medium melancholy</b>	Charlo					
<b>Low melancholy</b>	De Dios Filliberto, Francini & Pontier, Fresedo	De Caro, Castillo		Sassone		
<b>Neutral</b>			<i>De Angelis</i>			
<b>Low energetic</b>		Maderna, Tanturi, Piazzolla,		Bianco, Brunswick, Carabelli, D'Agostino, Esposito, Gobbi, Lomuto, Maglio, Brunswick, Victor	Garcia, Omar, Rodriguez	
<b>Medium energetic</b>	Di Sarli (sfter '42)			Buzon, Calo, Canaro	Biagi, Demare, Donato, Federico, Firpo, Laurenz, Malerba, Mora, Pirincho, Racciatti, Rotundo, S. Mayor, Troilo, Villasboas	
<b>Highly energetic</b>					Pugliese	D'Arienzo

Is this system to categorize tango music and tango orchestra's the only way to do it? Of course not. Any DJ should feel free to categorize music the way it suits him/herself best. Our minds work in different and mysterious ways and this is especially the case with DJ's. Other ways to categorize tango music are:

- Danceable versus non danceable (salonfähig or not salonfähig)
- Native, Argentinean versus foreign, non Argentinean
- Extravert versus introvert

Lately I have started to categorize music and orchestra's in 'introvert' and 'extravert'.

Introvert orchestra's can be found mostly among the older orchestra's (twenties and thirties) with a small line up (usually orchestra típica). Their music can be characterised by its intimacy and modesty, which usually has a calming effect on dancers and which invites dancers to dance in small steps. The most striking characteristic of introvert orchestras is their seemingly 'uneventfulness'.

Introvert orchestra's are: Bachicha (Juan Bautista Deambroggio), Eduardo Bianco, Francisco Canaro (early period), Alfredo Carabelli, Angel D'Agostino, Carlos Di Sarli (early period), Edgar Donato, Francisco Lomuto, Juan Maglio, Orquesta Típica Brunswick, Orquesta Típica Petrucelli, Orquesta Típica Victor, Juan Bautista Guido, Roberto Zerrillo, Juan De Dios Filiberto, Anselmo Aieta, Antonio Bonaveno, Enrique Santos Discepolo, Agesilao Ferrazano, Los Provincianos, Francisco Pracanico, Francisco Spaventa, etc.<sup>54</sup>

Extravert orchestra's are dominant in their music. Their musical style aims at grandness. It is music which can be described as 'eventful'. These orchestra's regularly use (de)crescendo's, whereas introvert orchestra's are more 'linear' in their music. The musical line ups of extravert orchestra's are greater (the gran orchestra's). The extravert orchestra's

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<sup>54</sup> You can find a lot of introvert orchestras on the CD '20 Orquestas olvidables' (EBCD 116): Anselmo Aieta, Manuel Pizarro, Julio Pollero, Orquesta Típica Cayetano Puglisi, Enrique Di Lorenzo, Juan De Dios Filiberto, etc. Also the DBN/ EMI Reliquias release 'Recordando Orquestas' and the Harlequin releases 'Buenos Aires to Berlin' (HQ CD 61) and 'Buenos Aires to Madrid' (HQ CD 88) contain recordings from introvert orchestras.

usually date back to the forties and fifties. The rise of D'Arienzo at the end of the thirties meant a great stimulant for extravert music. The extravert orquesta's music has an energizing effect on dancers and invites them to dance in a spacious way.

Examples of extravert orquesta's are: Juan D'Arienzo, Alfredo De Angelis, Miguel Calo, Pedro Laurenz, Florindo Sassone, Osvaldo Pugliese, Miguel Villasboas, Anibal Troilo, etc.

When DJ-ing I usually start a milonga with extrovert orquestas from the forties. These orquestas have a lot of drive. Towards the end of a milonga I occasionally play some introvert orquestas. At that time dancers usually have spent a lot of energy and welcome music with a more sedate pace. Introvert orquesta's, as listed above, can also function to cool down an overexcited crowd.

### **Two extra's: where to find music & what (not) to buy**

I am often asked where I find all these tango music and special music. Hardly an International Salon or International Week in El Corte passes without this question. So how do we find our music? Also the question to what are good tango music labels pops up regularly. To the first question there are more than one answer.

### **Knowledge is everything**

If I hear something nice in a salon I ask the DJ what he is playing. Most DJ's I know are more than willing to share their knowledge with you. My advice is to make notes. It is too easy to forget. In time you will build a system of knowledge about tango music, tango styles and tango musicians/orchestras. There are also some very good books on tango. Just to name a few: Birkenstock & Ruegg, Sebastian & Labrana and Ludwig'.<sup>55</sup>

Surfing on the internet can also be very helpful. There are a lot of tango sites. My advice is go to [todotango.com](http://todotango.com). They have a large section of musicians, orquestas and a lot more.

And if you have enough time, just google freely. Sifting through a large pile of junk, you also will find some gems.

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix A.

## **Music shops**

Whenever I see a music shop and I do have time, I enter this shop. Some are not interesting at all, others are excellent. Let's focus on the excellent ones:

- Ludwig Beck, Marienplatz, Munich, Germany.
- Saturn, Cologne, Germany.
- Cadena Lirica, Groningen, The Netherlands.

Before entering it might be wise to make a decision on how much you can afford or wish to spend. Don't forget your credit card!

There are also internet stores for which you really do need a credit card:

- iTunes
- Todotango.com
- Tangostore.com
- Amazon.com

## **Music lovers**

Exchange information and music with other music lovers and DJ's and do so with an open mind. Notice that I talking about music lovers and not about tango lovers. In time you will build a network of friends, which will supply you with lots and lots of (information about) music. Ask other music lovers about their network and where they find their music.

## **Being a DJ helps**

This means that you are active in music. Some dancers will ask you about music you don't know. This means you'll have to find out. There are even tango dancers who bring CD's to you, which is an initiative which should be encouraged at all times!

Do explain to them that you cannot play it right away and that you first want to listen to it at home. This gives you time to decide on what is good music and what you don't want to play!

## **Accidental encounters**

Sometime you just run into music quite unexpectedly. This can be a commercial on TV, a tune in a movie you are watching, music they are playing in a hotel, sauna, music shop, etc. Anything that makes you think: "Hey, I feel like dancing!" is likely to be suited for dancing.

Sometimes I hear music in TV commercials which is perfectly suited for dancing. I surf to their website and ask who the performers are and if they can send me an mp3-file. Some sites will send you the music and others don't respond at all. You can always try. You have nothing to lose.

### **DJ Discussion forums**

There are some DJ discussion forums on internet. You might find music and info there. I have not much experience with these groups, because I already have (more than) enough input. Discussions on the groups tend to be rather specific, technical and subjects can be trivial. Sometimes it seems that the forum members are more interested in talking about DJ-ing than in the actual DJ-ing itself ☺.

Tango music and special music which is suited for tango can be found at expected places (music shop & internet) unexpected places. A tango DJ will have to have an extensive tango music library, which is collected over the years. When you start building yours, you soon will find out that some music labels are very good and others are really bad or have a mediocre sound quality. To help you we will list some good labels and some mediocre labels.

### **Good music labels**

Music labels that distribute good tango music are Tango Argentino (DBN), Reliquias (DBN/EMI), From Argentina to the world and RCA Victor 100 anos (BMG). They all distribute very good quality music, music that has been (digitally) improved very well.

### **Mediocre music labels**

Mediocre music labels are El Bandoneon, Harlequin, Las Grandes Orquestas del Tango, En FM tango, Music Hall, Buenos Aires Tango Club and Danza y Movimiento. Sound quality differs from mediocre at best and to downright catastrophic at worst.

## 8 Structuring a salon

### Introduction

What a DJ can do is play at random all his/hers favourites with the implicit assumption that they are beautiful and very danceable. It might happen that a DJ who works like this will play a lot of completely incompatible music in a row. The result will be that the dance floor is empty and the dancers are sulking at the bar. Or even worse, they might have gone home and decided never to come back. It does not work this way. A DJ will have to bring some sort of a musical structure in a salon. In this chapter we will hand you the tools for structuring a salon: tanda and tandacycle, musical arcs, cortina's and specials.

### Tanda & tandacycle

Tanda's are the building blocks of a salon. A tanda is a series of musical pieces that form some sort of a unity. This unity can relate to several aspects:

- Dance form: vales, milongas, tangos, candombes, specials, etc.
- 'Colour' of an orchestra
- A certain musician or singer
- The use of a specific characteristic; for example a characteristic rhythm or instrument

Royce Chan mentions on her website also some other aspects which could / should be observed in the making of a tanda:<sup>56</sup>

- Records by the same orchestra
- Recordings from the same period
- Roughly the same speed (beats per minute)
- Roughly the same sound quality and level

A generally used tanda structure is: tango - valse - tango – milonga, which we call a tandacycle.. Sometimes a tanda will be replaced by something special. The art of DJ-ing is in the combination of tandas. Where tandas function as building stones for a salon and a tandacycle as a greater unit of tandas, musical arc's main function is to structure a salon.

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<sup>56</sup> R. Chan, The making of a tanda, <http://www.loksze.com/thoughts/page/2/> (2006).

A musical arc can consist out of one or more tandacycles, which function as a musical unity and present a musical trend in a salon.

### **Musical arc**

The main task of a DJ is work up to a climax. After the climax you can start all over again. A long salon will contain more than 2 musical arcs, where as a short salon or practice night usually has only 1 or 2 musical arcs.

After reaching a climax you just can't just go on building up pressure. It is an overkill that leads to nothing. It might even be contra productive. After a climax it is wise to pause a little longer before starting a new tanda or musical arc. In this short break the excitement can fade away. For example, I use breaks between songs in a tanda which last about 3 seconds, between tanda's 5 seconds and starting a new tandacycle 7 seconds or more.

A DJ always has a choice after a tanda: will I go on building up energy, will I keep the level of energy constant or will I create a dissonant?

In letting a salon slowly fade away till the end, there lies a danger of dancers getting bored. The end of a salon should be some sort of a climax. Dancers love it to go home with a fine energy or some catchy tune still ringing in their ears. If you hear some people whistling or humming the theme you ended with, this means you did a good job.

And finally, most dancers appreciate it when a DJ announces the end of the salon: 'and now the last five: three tangos from D'Arienzo, La Cumparsita and something special'.

### **Cortina**

A cortina (literally a curtain) is a piece of music, which is not meant for dancing. It is used to separate tanda's. Its function is for dancers to leave the dance floor so that new combinations can be formed. At least that is the way it is in some milonga's in Argentina. The use of cortina's was (re)introduced from Argentina to Europe about 10 years ago.

Among dancers and DJ's it is a controversial subject. Either you are in favour or you are against cortina's. We think it is important for a DJ to know why s/he (doesn't) uses cortina's. To do it because they also do it in Argentina is absurd. Cortina's have a function in a salon: to promote the circulation of dancers and people who at the moment are not dancing. It also functions as an opportunity for people to mix.

The situation of the dance floor is a crucial factor for (not) using cortina's. If the dance floor is surrounded by tables and chairs, then the dancers can't easily get into contact with others at the opposite site of the dancehall, cortina's do have a function. If the dance floor isn't surrounded by tables and chairs, there is no need for cortina's. So in El Corte we do not use cortina's (although some of our guest DJ's do), but what we do sometimes is a slightly longer period of silence between two tandas. This is what we call a silent cortina, which you can interpret as a compromise between a cortina and a constant flow of music.

### **Specials**

Specials are also subject of some controversy, but not as distinct as cortina's. A special is a piece of music to which you can dance tango, valse, etc, has certain elements of surprise (certainly not mainstream music!) and is meant to tempt dancers to break their dancing habits.

Specials usually are pieces of 'world music' (klezmer, salsa, mambo, rumba, etc.), classical music (opera, etc) or popular forms of music (jazz, blues, pop, etc.). Tango music can also function as special music. Think about Astor Piazzolla's tango nuevo's or spin offs from well know orchestras like Francisco Canaro's and Enrique Rodriguez's. Specials function as a way of breaking of the habits of dancers, after which you can begin a new musical arc. Sometimes they also function as a sort of cortina while promoting the circulation.

### **Bridge songs**

Certain songs can be used to initiate a new musical direction in a milonga, while at the same time they make a emotionally logic connection between two musical atmospheres. These songs are called bridge songs. For example, if you have been building up energy and momentum for some time, there will be a certain point when you will have to stop doing so. If you don't, it will backfire for sure.

A lot of bridge songs will be specials, but also traditional tangos, waltzes and milongas can function as a bridge. In the following list I will give some examples. This list is not intended to be complet, but it is a personal list. Other tango DJ's surely will use other bridge songs!

Song title	Artist	CD title (year)	Bridging ...
Usual happiness	Kroke	10 pieces to save the world (1999)	Energetic-lyrical.
Felicia	Domingo Federico	Saludos (1995)	Tango-milonga.
La yumba	Otros Aires	Dos (2007)	Pugliese-neo.
Milonga sentimental	Otros Aires	Otros Aires (2005)	Milonga-neo.
Rtc.	-	-	-

## Conclusion

Regardless of what type of tango DJ you are or aim to be; now it is up to the DJ to build a wonderful salon.<sup>57</sup> You have all the tools. It should be easy, but it is not. Sometime it is very hard and frustrating work. Even experienced DJ's will have nights it just doesn't work out. Some times feel catastrophic. Help, the DJ is drowning! What to do in a situation like this?

- Play it safe. Play only traditional rhythmical tangos everybody knows and loves. Have some super tandas in reserve. This gives you time to readjust your strategy.
- Don't experiment with new pieces of music you want to try out. If you don't feel happy as a DJ it is wise to keep a low profile. Don't try to attract attention at all. Some opportunities just are not meant for a DJ to give a personal touch to. So be it, accept it and wait for better times.
- Don't panic. Most dancers will give you more credit than you will expect. They will realize that you are trying to please them and still have to learn the trade. And remember, also experienced DJ's have their off days.
- Get into contact with the dancers and ask if they like it, if they have requests, etc.

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<sup>57</sup> In general you can distinguish three types of tango DJ's: the **traditional** DJ (only plays tangos from la epoca de oro and before this period), the **eclectic** DJ (plays not only traditional tangos, but also specials/alternative tangos) and the **thematic** DJ (plays for example only neotango and specials/alternative tangos).

## 9 Do & don't

*“Everybody wants to be a DJ,  
Everybody thinks it is oh so easy.”  
(Soulwax, Too many DJ's)*

*“Those who can't dance say the music is no good.”  
(Jamaican proverb, anonymus)*

We conclude this reader on tango DJ-ing with some guidelines, we learned by experience:

### **Don't loose your concentration**

Sometimes you will have to work for hours and naturally you will experience lesser periods of DJ-ing. Focus yourself on playing music people want to dance to.

Should a DJ dance while DJ-in? We don't advise it. Dancing while playing music is risky. Dancers might interpret is that you don't take DJ-ing seriously and even find it not very respectful. On practice nights and informal salons it is okay for a DJ to dance, but only in as far the DJ manages to remain in control of the musical flow. On the other side, some dancing to feel the atmosphere, might have a function for a DJ.

### **Try to 'read' your audience**

A good DJ respects his audience. S/he is there to see to it that the dancers have a good time dancing. A DJ who is able to read the signals from his audience and is able to translate it in to the musical scenario, shows his respect to his audience. But how do you read your audience? The following points might help you reading your audience:

- How many people are dancing and how many are not? Humans have a tendency to spread out proportionally in a space. If proportionally few people are dancing, a DJ should change his strategy.
- Who is leaving the dance floor and who is entering? If beginners leave the floor en masse you are playing too complex music. Vice versa if experienced dancers leave the floor it could be the music is too simple, maybe even boring. Aim at a compromise.
- What are the expressions of the dancers and the people who watch? Do they look happy, concentrated, confused, etc? Are they

enjoying themselves or not? By getting into contact with the dancers in a nonverbal way (a wink, a nod, a smile, etc.) you will often evoke a signal of what they feel. These signals give you a lot of information. I spend more time watching dancers than selecting music to play.

- Is the dancing chaotically or in a disciplined way? Are there (too much) collisions? If so; switch to more simple, rhythmical music most dancers know by heart.
- Is there a lot of talking when a piece of music or a tanda is finished and the other has not begun yet? Maybe you will have to calm your audience a bit or maybe there is not enough energy and excitement.
- Are dancers faithful to their (dance) partners or is there a lot of switching? If so, what do you do with it?
- Are their ‘chronic wallflowers’, people who don't dance at all? Ask them if they have a request or match them to somebody. Their enthusiasm when they get to dance, is very inspiring for a salon.
- What is circulation speed of dancers and loungers? A low circulation speed means that a salon is static. You can try to bring more variation in your music.

When Fatboy Slim was asked what defines a good DJ he said: “For me, it is whether they look up or not while they are playing. A good DJ is always looking at the crowd, seeing what they like, seeing whether it’s working, communicating with them, smiling at them. A bad DJ is always looking down at the decks and just doing whatever they practised in their bedroom, regardless of whether the crowd are enjoying it or not.”<sup>58 59</sup>

Another nice quote on reading your audience comes from B.B. King, who is always prepared to change his playlist during a concert, just to win over the audience: “I am concerned about them. Those are the people that caused me to be on the stage, and they can take you off the

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<sup>58</sup> Brwester & Broughton, *Last night a DJ saved my life*, 2006: 20.

<sup>59</sup> Fatboy Slim (born Quentin Leo Cook) is an English musician (drums), producer and DJ in the modern dance music genre. His music style is known as big beat, which is a combination of hip hop, break beat, rock, trance, house and rhythm and blues. Before pursuing a solo career, he was a member of The Housemartins and Freakpower. For more info, see Wikipedia UK.

satge. It is kind of like in any business. Are you listening to them, pro or con? Each audience is kind of like, excuse the word, a lady. They have a right to change their mind, and they do. You have to be alert enough to tell that if you are not going very well in this direction, change it, abruptly.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Know your music**

*“Boy, you have to honour the music more than your mother.”*

(Omar Vega’s old teacher)

A good DJ knows his music and is obsessive about his music collection. Knowing your music will consume a lot of time, if not a lifetime.

If you don’t know the music your are playing, how can you estimate what effects it will have on the audience? And a good DJ should always be hungry for new music.

To illustrate this, I quote Brewster and Broughton (again):

“The DJ knows music better than you, better than your friends, better than everyone else on the dance floor or in the record shop. (...) A great DJ will hit a room with musical moments so new and so fresh that it is irrelevant that the music is recorded, and so powerful that they easily surpass your all time favourites. (...) The real work of a DJ isn’t standing behind some record decks for a couple of hours, looking shifty and waiting for some drink tickets; the time and effort comes in a life spent sifting through music and deciding if it is good, bad or *‘Oh-my-God-listen-to-this!’* A DJ’s job is to channel the vast oceans of recorded sound into a single unforgettable evening. (...) To become a good DJ You have to develop the *hunger*. You have to search for new records with the same zeal of a gold rush prospector digging in a blizzard. You have to develop an excitement for vinyl that verges on a fetish. You should not be able to walk past a charity shop without worrying what classic rarity you might have missed nestling among those Osmond LP’s.”<sup>61</sup>

### **Know your audience**

If you know what the audience likes and what they don't like you can avoid a lot of trouble. Don't hesitate to ask the dancers. Also the organi-

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<sup>60</sup> Kostelanetz, R., B.B. King, *The B.B. King Companion*. Five decades of commentary, 1997: xv.

<sup>61</sup> Brwester & Broughton, *Last night a DJ saved my life*, 2006: 16-17.

zation can usually provide good info. For example if they recently provided a milonga workshop, you can play some more milonga tandas.

### **Know yourself**

Knowing yourself, your weak points and your strong points is important. Be critical to yourself but not too critical, or otherwise it will spoil your fun in DJ-ing. Being aware of mistakes you made, will teach you important lessons. It is not a problem to make a mistake, but it is irritating for your audience if you do not learn from it. You might want to keep a DJ-diary in which you write down the things you learned. Also helpful will be evaluating your own play list after a few days.

### **Perform in a dynamic way**

Always try to aim at a dynamic performance. A DJ who plays the same type music all night long doesn't do the dancers any good. Even if the music is brilliant and very good to dance to, it will become irritating after some time. Variety is the spice of life.

### **Look for the 'common denominator'**

Most DJ's I know, happen to be experienced dancers and have also an extensive musical knowledge and experience in tango music and other types of music. This implies a risk in DJ-ing. A DJ might have an unconscious tendency to play difficult and musically interesting or special music. For beginners this is usually too difficult to dance to and they drop out. Believe me, you don't want that to happen because without beginners a tango scene has no future at all. Play simple music, music used in teaching tango, etc. but only incidentally something more complicated.

### **Do not play too loud**

As I mentioned before: if you have to shout, the music is too loud. However when you have been DJ-ing for some hours, you might get used to a certain soundvolume and wonder if it is still loud enough. An occasional walk through the dance hall will help you place it into the right perspective. Also leaving the dance hall for a few minutes (smoking, toilet, some fresh air) will do the trick.

During a milonga you will have to adjust the sound volume constantly. In the beginning of a milonga (when there not many visitors yet) the

soundvolume needed is less than what the milonga needs when it is fully crowded. Towards the end, when people start to leave, you should not forget to turn the soundvolume lower otherwise it will be too loud.

So you will be constantly adjusting the volume, also because there are serious differences in soundlevels between different recordings.

Not only the sound volume is an important factor, but also too much bass and treble can irritate the dancers. It is unpleasant for your ears. Note that in neotango music there usually is a lot of bass. So it might be wise to adjust the sound and/or bass, or neighbours will start complaining!

### **Don't try to attract (too much) attention**

A DJ is there at the service of the dancers and not for some ego boosting. Of course you will show your character in playing music, but be critical to yourself.

This is not an easy thing for beginning DJ's. Sometimes you find fascinating music you fall in love with. A blind spot can give you a bum steer. What you think is fascinating music, is a very personal thing. It is absolutely no guarantee that others will share your enthusiasm. What to do with this special piece of music that is 'haunting' you? Don't play it for some weeks and check if it still is a darling to you. Try to dance to it and register how it feels. Try it out in an informal setting (after a class perhaps) and ask what people think of it. Sometimes you will have to kill your 'darling', but you can always listen to it at home. Or you can very carefully try to plug it by playing it over and over again and making it a hit.

### **Requests**

From time to time somebody will request a song. You don't have to respond to it immediately. It might very well take about half an hour to fit the request into your scheme. A request that doesn't fit into the atmosphere at all can be ignored. Always do explain why you can't honour a request and if you can honour it, about what time they can expect their request.

*"And I get tired of djs  
Why is it always what he plays  
I'm gonna push right through"*

*I'm gonna tell him to  
Tell him to play us  
Play us a slow song”  
(Joe Jackson A slow song)*

### **Exchange experiences with other DJ's**

Apart from exchanging music with other DJ's it can be helpful to talk shop with other DJ's about DJ-ing. Giving and receiving feedback in a respectful way has never harmed anybody yet. And two do know more than one. The advantage of asking another DJ to give feedback is that s/he speaks the lingo.

### **Be your self**

*“I am a DJ, I am what I play”  
(David Bowie, D.J.)*

You are unique in your taste and the way you build up a milonga. Be true to yourself. If an organiser asks you to DJ in a style you can't tolerate: say no to the offer.

And if, after a few good gigs in a row, you grow too big for your breeches (that is get conceited), remember John Peels' words: “It is obvious that disc-jockeys, as a class, are essentially parasitic. We are, with lamentably few exceptions, neither creative nor productive. We have, however, manipulated the creations of others (records) to provide ourselves with reputations as arbiters of public taste.”<sup>62</sup> <sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Peel, John, *Margrave of the marshes*. His autobiography, London: Corgi Books, 2005:22.

<sup>63</sup> John Peel (born John Robert Parker Ravenscroft) was a legendary English DJ, radio presenter and journalist, who was known for his eclectic taste. Peel promoted many new artists and bands of various music styles. Among the bands which credit Peel as a major boost to their careers are: T-Rex, David Bowie, The Sex Pistols, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Fairport Convention, Pink Floyd, The Clash, The Undertones, Buzzcocks, The Cure, Joy Division and PJ Harvey. For more info on John Peel: see previous note and Wikipedia UK.

## Appendices

### A Suggested reading & interesting sites<sup>64</sup>

#### About technics & general works

I didn't come across books on tango DJ-ing, but there are some books on DJ-ing in general. They mainly deal with modern DJ-ing (house, techno, trance and the like). They have some but not much relevance for tango DJ-ing. These books are:

- **Broughton, Bill & Brewster, Frank**, Last night a DJ saved my life. The history of the disc jockey (New century edition), London: Headline Book Publishing, 2006
- **Broughton, Bill & Brewster, Frank**, How to DJ (properly), ?: Bantam Press, 2002.

#### About tango DJ-ing:

- -, A beginners guide to tango record labels (internet).
- **Brown, Stephen**. Playing music for milongas: the DJ's role. Tango Argentino de Tajés (internet).
- **Brown, Stephen**. The musicalizadore of Argentine Tango: Building a library, How to improve as a DJ & The dancers and the DJ, 2003-2004 (internet)
- **Brown, Stephen**. Classics of tango dance music & A DJ's guide to post-golden-age recordings Tango Argentinas de Tajés.
- **Elshew, Keith c.s.** Programming music for milongas (internet).
- **Fisher, Veronika**, A guide to tango Djing (mailed to me by author, maybe available via Tango DJ forum).
- **Herreman, Tine. W.**, DJ resource and recipes (mailed to me by author, maybe available via Tango DJ forum).
- **Kovalchuke, Oleh**. Argentine tango blog (internet)
- **Morrall, Steve**. Djangology (internet).
- **Muller, P.** Short guide for tango DJ's (internet)
- **Tango DJ Forum**, Yahoo group of tango DJ's talking shop, (internet).

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<sup>64</sup> I refrained from giving the exact links because internet links have a tendency to become obsolete rather quickly.

## About tango as a social phenomenon

About tango a social, economical, cultural and musical phenomenon many books have been written, although some of them are completely ridiculous. If you want to form a picture of the how and why of tango (and as a DJ should at least be able to answer some questions) we refer to the books mentioned below.<sup>65</sup>

- **Aslan, P.**, The evolution of tango music, adapted from Tango stylistic evolution and innovation, UCLA master thesis, 1990.
- **Azzi, S. & Collier, S.**, Le grand tango, The life and music of Astor Piazzolla, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- **Birkenstock, A. & Rüegg, H.**, Tango. De bewogen geschiedenis van een dans. Amsterdam, Arbeiderspers, 2002.
- **Brown, J.C.**, A brief history of Argentina. New York: Checkmark Books., 2004.
- **Campos Salva, C.**, Tango, Buenos Aires: Visor, 2005.
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<sup>65</sup> If this is not enough for you, contact me at El Corte or send me an e-mail.

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## **B Soundengineering for DJ's** **(By Michiel Lombaers)**

DJ-ing means you also have to be able to operate some technical equipment trying to get music to sound as good as possible. This appendix will give you a fundamental insight in the musical configurations you can come across while DJ-ing.

### **Who, what and why?**

This ‘manual’ is (initially) for the participants of the DJ workshop in “El Corte”, the Tango school of Eric Jørisen in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, and assumes no prior knowledge of sound engineering.

There are a couple of essential tricks that a DJ should know when working on a PA-system without the aid of a seasoned sound engineer. There are also a couple of small and cheap tools that can save the evening.

Again, it’s about saving the evening (or at least a part of it). Consider the situation where you’re the DJ on a milonga on location with a rented PA system. When there is also an orchestra involved there is a big chance that the mixing-console will have 10 times too many channels with 5 times too many functions. That’s 50 times too many knobs and switches to confuse you.

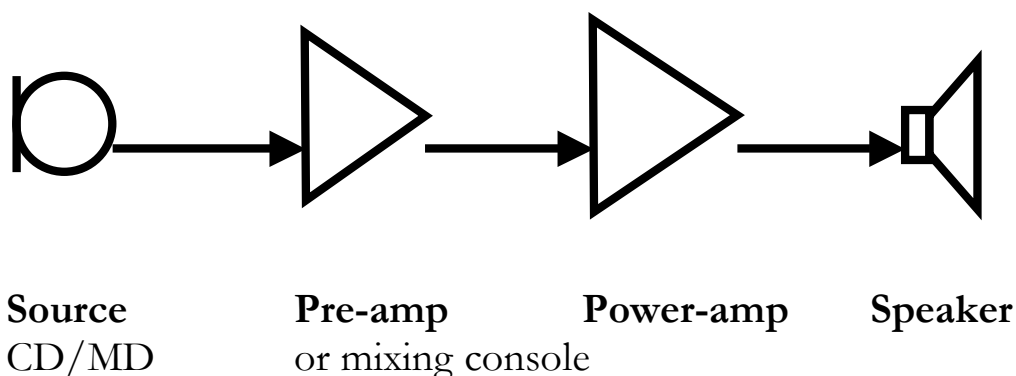
The sound engineer that is responsible for the PA is off-site, (apply your own favorite horror scenario here) the promoter would like to hear some music and the first milongueros are eager to hit the floor...

There is a specific sequence of working that’ll give the best chance of trouble free sound. But rule number 1 is most important:

- don’t let anybody rush you,
- work methodical,
- and check (or even double check) every step.

Because this tutorial will introduce a couple of terms and expressions that might be new to you, a couple of those will be explained here.

## The audio chain



There is a common system of building blocks in (almost) every audio chain. Those include:

- **A source:** this can be a CD, a mini-disk player, a tape-deck, or a microphone.
- **A pre-amp:** this can be a part of your domestic Hi-Fi, a dedicated one, or a mixing console (which is in fact a whole load of pre-amps bundled together). Here you sort the different sources, apply EQ (tone control) when needed, and adjust the volume of the final output.
- **A power amp:** this is the unit that boosts the signal up to the level that is required to drive the speakers.
- **Speakers:** these transform the sound from an electrical signal to an acoustic (audible) one.
- **Cabling:** apart from your precious ghetto-blaster every audio system has an amount of cables to connect the various pieces with each other. Most of the cables and connectors of a professional sound-system are designed for their specific function.

Most important for us is the central control unit in the sound system.

## The mixing console

In basic principle the big sound system with mixing console (a.k.a. PA or Public Address system) is not so very different from your home stereo. You can select a (sound) signal, adjust and amplify it until it has enough power to drive the speakers to the desired volume. The biggest differences are in the feature of summing up signals and the possibility to control and adjust almost every stage of the sound amplification.



A simple mixing console (as shown above) is divided in channels where the individual sounds are adapted and then fine-tuned, and a master section where they are mixed together, with a possibility for sub-mix channels in between. (Hopefully, we won't need to know about sub-mixing.)

This will give at least three stages to adjust the volume:

- At first comes '**gain**', situated as the first thing after the input, on top of the channel. Here you can optimize the level, as it comes out of your player, to your channel.
- Secondly there is the **channel fader**, situated on the bottom of the channel. When you need to adjust the levels between songs, it's the best to use this fader.
- And finally there is the '**master fader**'. The point where all the active channels are combined and sent to the mixer output connections. The fader(s) at this point regulate the overall output volume and is normally left at a preset value.

Then there are a couple of parts in-between that can be used to fine tune the sound or separate it to different outputs:

- **EQ:** The most important part for us. This section can be build up in various ways but it will at least have a low and a high filter. Beside that it can have:

- A low cut switch. This is a filter that is designed to filter out ‘rumble’ low frequency noise like the handling noise of a microphone or the resonations of a 78 rpm record played back with a Hi-Fi pick-up.
- One or more mid-band controls, very useful on old records. Sometimes with frequency and (more rare) band-width control, very useful to confuse the novice operator.
- A bypass switch. With this switch you can compare if the settings you choose are actually an improvement.
- **Aux sends:** Extra outputs can be sent individually with these controls. Come in two ‘flavors’, pre- or post-fader:
  - Pre-fader means that the channel fader won’t influence the signal level.
  - Post-fader means that the channel fader will influence the signal level. Post-fader it can be used to control the sound level for another room.
- **Pan or Balance:** This knob controls the virtual position of the signal in the stereo ‘picture’ between the left and right speaker set:
  - Pan (short for panorama) is used on mono channels and balances the output from the channel to hard left to hard right. Or somewhere in between.
  - Balance is used on stereo channels and controls the emphasis on the left or right side of the stereo channels but keeps them on their left/right position.

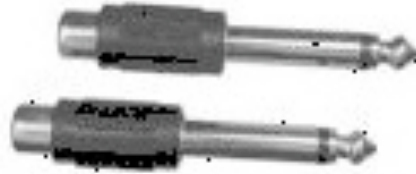
## What to bring

The first step is to connect your source (CD/minidisk/MP3 player) to the mixing console. For this you’ll need cables. And as soon as you bring one (or some) of these sources yourself, consider yourself also responsible for the right type of connecting cables. Of course you can take a gamble and assume that the PA engineer will have all the cables needed at hand, but you can play it safe and bring your own.

Please keep in mind that some of those mixing consoles can be quite big, so a length of three meters for such a cable is useful.

Now if you run your music on domestic equipment most of the time you’ll be familiar with the ‘RCA’ or ‘phono’ connector. The most mixing consoles however have their line level inputs on 1/4”(6.35mm) TS (tip-sleeve) or TRS (tip-ring-sleeve) connectors. The same type as those used

on older headphones (modern ones generally use 3.5mm mini-jacks, especially if they are for Walkmans etc). There are simple & cheap RCA to 1/4" TS converter plugs on the market, and it's worth the money to have a couple of them with you.



Another important tool is a headphone. For this work the best type are the fully closed ones that enable you to isolate sounds from your environment. Leave the little earplug-phones at home – or throw them away. Those types of earphones are actually bad for your ears!

### **Where to connect**

The most convenient way is if the console has stereo channels free. Most of the time you can find them near the 'master section' in the center or on the right of the console. How to recognize the master section? First find the input channels. They will all be next to each other and they will be more or less identical. (The master section is the more complicated-looking area...) A stereo input channel may be labeled as 'stereo' and the numbering might be odd & even on the same strip. Sometimes when the labeling is missing you can look at the knob (A.K.A. pan-pot) that adjust the stereo position of the sound image. It will then be called 'balance' or 'bal'. You can find it normally above the fader.

If there is no stereo channel available you can take two mono channels. When you're not confining yourself to the music of the (first) [????] 'golden era' (in other words, when your running music in stereo) you'll have to use one channel for the left-hand signal and one for the right. Turn the pan pots all the way to all the way to left for the former and all the way to the right for the latter. Then all you need to do is connect up your sound source. Look for L and R on the connectors if you're using a stereo channel, or just remember which is left and right if you're using two mono channels.

Please do not disconnect anything that is already plugged in to the console in order to avoid fatal collisions with the responsible sound engineer. (Unless you really *\*really\** know what you're doing, but then, would you need this manual?)

### **Once you're connected, getting sound**

The next step is to adjust the channel to the source that you're using. The first step is to adjust the input gain, but to be able to do that you have to isolate the channel that you're adjusting. For this you'll find a switch named 'solo' or 'PFL' (pre fader listening). It's the same function as the 'cue' switch found on disco mix consoles. When this switch is active, the signal will be on the headphones and visible on the meter in the master section.

There will be some other switches near the gain pot but most of them you can ignore and/or should be in their default (off) position. Those can be (not all the mixing consoles are alike on these items):

- '+48', 'P48' or 'phantom',
- 'phase' or 'ø',
- 'pad' or '-20dB',
- 'B' and 'line'.

Only that last two are important when they're part of the channel strip. 'Line' will deselect the microphone input and activate the line-input for your player. With a lot of smaller modern mixers this happens automatically as soon as a 1/4" jack is plugged into that channel. 'B' will select a second set of line-inputs on the stereo channels of some consoles.

Play some music and adjust the gain until the loudest parts of the recording are showing  $\pm 0 \sim +6$  dB on the level-meter. The best is to use a recording that is loud and adjust your gain to this recording. Once set this setting shouldn't be changed anymore. If you can't get any reading at all on the meter, check your connections and then check that the sound source really is generating a signal, e.g. by looking at it, plugging some headphones into it directly etc. It may be on 'pause', not have a disc in etc. You can also plug another sound source into the channel you are trying to use and see if that gets a result. Another approach is to temporarily try another channel. In other words, work methodically to discover whether a signal is being generated and if so, where it is getting blocked on its path to your mixer's master section.

Once you have set the level you can slowly slide the fader up and listen for the signal coming out of the speakers. If not, there will be a couple of things to check.

### !Caution!

**With the following actions you should keep the channel fader down and after every change you can slide it up for a moment to check if the sound can be heard.**

- First deselect the solo/PFL switch so that the meters will show the actual output of the console.
- Then check if the master fader is open.
- If the meter still shows no output and/or you hear no sound, check if the channel is active ('on'), no switch called 'mute' is engaged and, if there are sub-mix channels, that on the channel that you use for play-back the switch 'mix' or 'L/R' is engaged. At that moment you should see level reactions on your main meters.

If at this point there is still no sound coming out of the main speakers the amplifiers are probably muted. This is tricky. It's best if the PA engineer switches these on. There might be a specific sequence required regarding which block of the power-amps is switched on first and which one last.

### Fine adjustments

Once you have the music running, you'll want to fine tune the sound. The tools that are on the console are more extended than those on a standard stereo set. There are various options available. Most of the EQ controls on a mixing console are either three or four band. This means that there are one or two bands in the mid-frequencies. This is very useful with old recordings. There is even the possibility to have 'sweep' EQs, where the frequency of boosting or cutting can be chosen. With some old harsh sounding recordings you can search for the most annoying frequency band and cut only that one down.

Those sweep EQs need a little time to get used to. If you ever have the chance to try the sound in an (almost) empty hall take your discs and practice!

This is a point where headphones are handy. When preparing a new ‘tanda’ you can listen to the sound quality and make some pre-adjustments with the EQ.

**Finally!** <sup>66</sup>

Hopefully at this point you’ve succeeded in getting music on the floor and some dancers too. Now you can start with that game that is so much more important. Have fun!

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<sup>66</sup> This appendix is a simple introduction. If this is not enough for you or if you have questions, you can email [mlombaers@mac.com](mailto:mlombaers@mac.com). Wikipedia UK also has interesting info on mixing consoles, equalizers, gain and audio amplifiers.

## C Laptop DJ-ing for tango DJ's <sup>67</sup>

### 1 Introduction

More and more tango DJ's use a laptop, and others thinking about switching from Cd's to a laptop. DJ's who work with CD's or even MD's seem to be a disappearing breed.

This is not very surprising, for the advantages of laptop DJ-ing are numerous. The average hard disk of a laptop can easily contain 10.000 songs. Imagine bringing 500 CD's to a milonga, you would need a wheelbarrow. Furthermore, a laptop offers great opportunities for categorising your music collection. You can add all sorts labels to your music: instrumental or vocal, genre, yaer of recording, composer, etc. A laptop makes your music collection more easibly accessable, which allows you to be more flexible in your DJ-ing. And finally, laptops are not so expensive anymore as they used to be some years ago.

Of course there are also disadvantages to DJ-ing with a laptop. The importing and labelling takes a lot od time.<sup>68</sup> Also the normalization of soundvolume is quite a job.<sup>69</sup> There are disadvantages to laptops in general. If you consider standardization and compatibility, you will find a lot of differences between sevral types of laptops. By the way, these are the same problems the PC experienced some yaers ago. What can be expected is that in coming years also the world of laptops will become more standardized and compatible.

If you consider using a laptop for DJ-ing, you should ask yourself some questions:

- Will I earn enough as a DJ to make it economically feasible?
- What DJ/music programma do I want to use and what are the characteristics such a program should have?
- Am I a technical enough to DJ with a laptop?

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<sup>67</sup> In this essay I will use the term laptop and not notebook. In fact it is the same: a mobile computer, which works on a battery or an adaptor and which can do the same tasks as a PC.

<sup>68</sup> On internet you can find free ware file tagging programs.

<sup>69</sup> You can also choose to forget the normalization of sound levels and use the mixing console while DJ-ing a milonga.

And if you are already using a laptop for DJ-ing, the next questions might interest you:

- What type of audio files are best to use?
- How do I get the best sound possible?

## 2 Financial aspects

It is not economically feasible for every DJ to buy a laptop. If you don't DJ very often and don't need a computer for other purposes, it would be nonsensical to start laptop DJ-ing. On the other hand, if you already have a laptop, why shouldn't you use it for DJ-ing?

If you DJ regularly (at least once a month), it is likely that you will earn back your investment within a few years. By making a cost-benefit analysis you can make an estimate if it will be profitable for you. Laptop DJ-ing can be profitable if the benefits are greater than the costs. The benefits are what you get paid as you DJ and the costs are what you had/have to invest to be able to DJ with a laptop: buying a laptop and a DJ/musicprogramme, travelling costs, music, etc.

Let me illustrate this with a simple example.

### *Example*

Suppose you DJ every month for 4 hours and you get EUR 12,50 per hour. You buy a laptop for EUR 600,- and have EUR 10,- travel expenses every month. The other instruments you need (headphone, adaptor, cables, etc.) cost EUR 160,-. Every month you buy a CD (the rest you already bought or borrow from friends) for EUR 10,-.

In the following tabels I will show the fictious financial process of this DJ enterprise.

<b>Year 1: Staring a business</b>			
Benefits		Costs	
DJ income	600,-	Laptop	600,-
		Travel	120,-
		Instruments	160,-
		CD's	120,-
Total	600,-	Total	1000,-

In the first year there is a loss of EUR 400,-. This loss is mainly caused by long term investments like the purchase of a laptop, and instruments.

<b>Year 2: Break even point</b>			
Benefits		Costs	
DJ income	600,-	Travel	120,-
		CD's	120,-
Total	600,-	Total	240,-

The second year is more positive, you already earn EUR 360,-. In total you nearly reach your break even point.

At the beginning of your third year a milonga in another town invites you to come every month and DJ there. They pay you EUR 50,- per milonga and what is more they also pay travelling expenses.

<b>Year 3: Making a profit</b>			
Benefits		Costs	
DJ income	1200,-	Travel	120,-
		CD's	120,-
Total	1200,-	Total	240,-

In the third year you earn EUR 960,-. So totalling the first three years you earned EUR 2400,- and had 1480,- costs. Your profit is EUR 920,-, which is more than EUR 300,- per year.

Of Course this example is a simple one. However, you can adapt this model to your own situation. For example, if you DJ more often than once a month and/or get paid better, you will start making a profit sooner. What I wanted was to show you a way of thinking, which might help you when deciding on laptop DJ-ing or not.

### **3 Software**

We (the authors) work with Megaseq, a DJ programme specially designed for Mac.<sup>70</sup> So it doesn't work on Windows operated machines. There is however a iTunes version for Windows and a variety of other music/DJ programmes for Windows, like Tractor.

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<sup>70</sup> For more info on Megaseq: [www.megaseq.com](http://www.megaseq.com). Megaseq works with iTunes.

It doesn't really matter what operating system you use (Mac or Windows). What does matter is whether a music/DJ programme does possess the facilities that you (as a DJ) need for doing your job.

What facilities are needed for a DJ programme for tango DJ's? Just as a suggestion:

- Reliability: if a program crashes regularly, it will not make you happy and after some time nobody invites you anymore as a DJ.
- Structured: a program should be structured in a logical, user friendly manner.
- Comptability: if your program has troubles interacting with other systems and or programs, you isolate yourself as a DJ.

In this section we will discuss some of the most often used DJ programs in tango: Megaseq, Tractor, iTunes, etc.<sup>71</sup> The question which is crucial in this discussion is whether a program is suited for a tango DJ, which is of course essentially different from a modern trance or hiphop DJ. Most DJ program we have seen seem to be built for modern DJ's.

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**This space is reserved for a discussion on the  
various DJ/music programs by Michiel Lombaers**  
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DJ programmes usually have a lot of facilities which are hardly interesting for a tango DJ. Beatjuggling and beatmixing are not necessary for tango DJ-ing, although you will never know what the neotango will bring us.<sup>72</sup> It is not impossible that the technics which are now used in neotango will someday be used in underground neotango milongas. Maybe a Tango Tiësto will enter the charts in a few years!

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<sup>71</sup> If you work with iTunes and want to know more about the ins and outs the following site , [www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/itunes/](http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/itunes/) might interest you.

<sup>72</sup> Beatmixing is a form of mixing two subsequent songs, so that the beat of the first song fades into the beat of the second song. Beatjuggling is the manipulation of two or more music samples to create a new sample of music. Herefore the DJ can use two turntables and one or more mixers. Techniques which are often used in this process are the use of breaks, scratching, backspins and delays.

## 4 Audio files

Are you technical enough to become a laptop DJ? Well, I would be surprised if you weren't. Laptop DJ-ing allows you to make it as easy or complicated as you want. Before starting to DJ with a laptop, see that you are advised well. We will not discuss the technological aspects of tango DJ-ing in depth, because this is a subject which is changing fast.

### *Audio files*

In digital audio there are numerous types of audio files, which has to do with different encoding systems.<sup>73</sup> Some of the most widely used types of audio files are: AAC, AIFF, Apple Lossless, MP3, MP4 and WAV.

**AAC** (**A**dvanced **A**udio **C**oding) sounds better than MP3 and is the default option of Apple iPod and iTunes. These music files have a .m4a extension.<sup>74</sup> The advantages of AAC to MP3 are numerous: more sampling frequencies, supports up to 48 channels, larger encoding efficiency and provides better sound above 16 kHz.

**AIFF** (**A**udio **I**nterchange **F**ile **F**ormat) is a type of audio file often used for containing sound in PC's. It is based on IFF (which is often used in Amiga systems). AIFF is also used often in Apple Macintosh configurations.

**Apple Lossless** (a.k.a. Apple Lossless encoder, ALE or Apple Lossless Audio Codec, ALAC) is an audio codec, which is developed by Apple and aims at the compression of music without any loss of quality.<sup>75</sup> The compression can be up to 50% of the original file. The extension of an Apple Lossless file is also .m4a.

**MP3** (**M**PEG Audio Layer **3**) is probably the most widely known audio file, but not the best. In a few years it might become obsolete, since there are so many more codecs which give better sound quality.

The extension is .mp3.

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<sup>73</sup> Encoding refers to the process of transforming data from one format to another format. The opposite process is called decoding.

<sup>74</sup> If you want to know more about file extensions, try [www.filext.com](http://www.filext.com).

<sup>75</sup> An (audio) codec is a software program, which encodes and decodes digital (audio) data according to a standardized procedure (algorithm). Codec is an abbreviation for **C**ompressor/**D**ecompressor, **C**oder/**D**ecoder, or **C**ompression **D**ecompression algorithm.

**MP4 (MPEG-4 Part 14)** is based on Apple's Quicktime container format. MP4 uses .mp4 as an extension, but this creates a lot of confusion, because the MPEG-4 container format can also contain audio and video streams. For this reason there are other extensions in use, like:

- audio only files: .mp4
- audio books and podcasts: .m4b (or sometimes .m4a)
- MP4 files with audio and video: .mp4 and .m4v, occasionally .mp4v.

**WAV or WAVE (Waveform Audio Format)** is the standard audio file format used by IBM and Microsoft. A WAV file has a maximum capacity of 4 GiB. The file extension is .wav.

### *SPARS codes*

Some CD's still carry the AAD, ADD or DDD code. These codes are called SPARS codes. SPARS is an abbreviation of Society of Professional Audio Recording Studios. This code will tell you what type of studio recorder (analog or digital), mixing recorder (analog or digital) and mastering (always digital) have been used.

The first letter of the SPARS code refers to the studio recorder, the second letter to the mixing recorder and the last letter to the mastering.

So:

- **AA**D stands for analog studio recorder, analog mixing / editing recorder and digital mastering
- **AD**D stands for analog studio recorder, digital mixing / editing recorder and digital mastering
- **DD**D stands for digital studio recorder, digital mixing / editing recorder and digital mastering

Nowadays you don't see the SPARS codes so often anymore, because this system has some great disadvantages. The SPARS code only refers to recorders and not to some other instruments used (like microphones) for recording music. Using the SPARS code as an indication for sound quality is therefore a bit risky, for there are just too many AAD recordings which have a better sound quality than DDD recordings.

## *File conversion*<sup>76</sup>

File conversion can cause some serious problems.

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**This space is reserved for a discussion on the ins and outs of file conversion.**

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## **5 Hardware**

For DJ-ing with a laptop you will need some hardware, like a soundcard, cables, adaptor, headphone, etc.

### *Soundcards*

A soundcard is an extension card, which enables a computer to produce (output) or store (input) a audio data. A soundcard (see photo below) contains two transformation facilities: a DA converter (which transforms a digital signal to an analogous signal (sound) and a AD converter (which does the opposite). The AD process is also called sampling.

Futhermore does a soundcard contain a mixer which enables the sound volume regulation of the different sources (mike, MIDI, line, WAV).



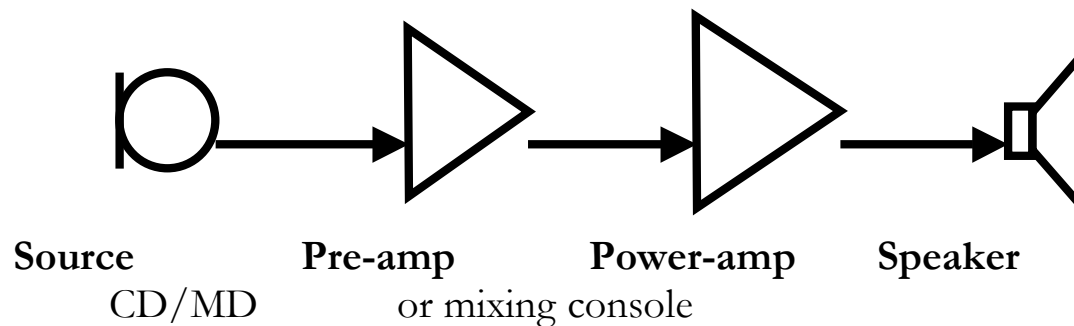
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<sup>76</sup> For those who want to know more about the conversion of audio files, we refer to <http://www.blazeaudio.com> (tutorials) en <http://www.hitsquad.com>.

The built in soundcard (audio interface) of some computers and laptops produces a mediocre sound quality. But fortunately you have a possibility of installing (or having installed) a better quality soundcard in your computer. It goes without saying that a good soundcard is essential for DJ's. Buy the best sound card there is, but keep in mind the price quality ratio. A very expensive sound card can produce a better sound, but is the surplus price you pay for it reasonable, if you compare it to the surplus sound quality it gives?

Always realise that the audio chain (see figure below) is only as strong as its weakest link. A super sound card in a audio chain with lousy speakers is a waste of money.

*Figure: audio chain*



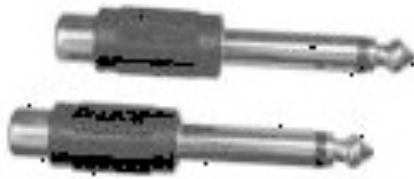
What may come in handy is a second (mobile) soundcard, which enables you (if your music/DJ program allows you) to preview the music from your library before putting it into your playlist. If you DJ according to a prepared playlist, you don't need this function of course. But in our opinion somebody who calls himself a DJ does interact with his audience and does not work with scenarios prepared at home.

### *Cables, plugs and adaptors*

In the next photo you see a audio cable.



In combination with an audio cable it is advisable to have a pair of 1/4 inch jacks (see photo below). I remember a DJ in Munich, who was very happy that I brought some!



Look out when you roll the cable that you don't cause a break in the cable.

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**This space is reserved for a discussion on the several types of hardware.**

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On the field of electricity there is unfortunately not a worldwide standard. In different parts of the world there are several types of power points (plug sockets), plugs and electric currency. So if you are a traveling DJ, be sure to check what electricity system is used in the country you go to. A good site to do so is Conrad H. McGregor's, where he discusses the lack of standardization on electrics:

<http://users.pandora.be/worldstandards/electricity.htm>. Consulting this site may help you to avoid some nasty surprises.

## *Headphones*

For a travelling DJ a compact headset will be very convenient.

Headphones can be connected to an audio player (Cd, amplifier, laptop, etc.) with a jack plug, which comes in two varieties: 1/4 inch plug and a 3.5 mm plug.

On the photo below you see (from left to right): 2.5 mm mono, 3.5 mm (1/8") mono/stereo and a 6.3 mm (1/4") stereo jack plugs.

*Photo: plugs*



Headphones are regular health hazards. Listening too long for a too period to loud music through a headphone can and will lead to temporary or permanent loss of hearing. This is caused by the masking effect; that is that a user of a headphone will put the volume level up to mask the background noises, like public transportation, discos, large crowds, etc.. By getting used to higher sound volume, the pain sensations disappear.

## **6 Tips and tricks**

Some tips and tricks we learned in practice:

- Make a regular back up on a rebootable hard disk (Firewire?).
- Bring some CD's (just to be sure), in case your laptop crashes.
- Customize your laptop. You can arrange it the way it works best for you. Do it! What works for you, doesn't have to be functional for another DJ.

- Most tango recordings are mono recordings. Stereo became available to the public in 1958. Recordings before 1958 (which include all tango recordings from la epoca de oro) are mono. These old tango recordings do not contain very much information; very high and very low frequencies are often absent or off low quality. For mono recordings a bit speed of 128 kbps is enough, for stereo recordings a bit rate of 192 kbps or (preferably) 256 kbps is advisable.

- Laptops can be transported very well. (As a matter of fact they were designed to be transported.) If you fly, take your laptop as hand-luggage, because you will never know how they handle your suitcase. Another reason is that in the baggage compartments it can be very cold and you just don't know how these extreme changes in temperature will influence your laptops performance. Check the technical data of your laptop!

Also you should realise that a lot of small vibrations (rolling suitcases) can harm your hard disk.

- If you roll your cables in the same way over and over again, they will show some preformed loops, which can cause a break in your cable.

- Most music/DJ programs offer a lot of possibilities to add information to a song. In iTunes I use name of artist, song title, CD title, year, genre, composer and remarks. In iTunes you can choose which categories you want to use (Apple J for “weergeave” opties). For example I use the remarks category to state whether a song is vocal or instrumental. But I could also decide to label a song as rhythmical, lyrical, energetic, melancholy. In the following section I will discuss the extra categorization possibilities a music/DJ program offers you and which make DJ-ing easier.

- It is a hell of a job, but attaching tempos to songs (beats per minute or BPM's) is very helpful. There are programs you can use to count the BPM. If you work regularly with tandas with increasing temps, this is very helpful.

## 7 Categorisation

A music/DJ program has an advantage: you can attach labels to it. When I started DJ-ing with a laptop, I found this the most difficult and time consuming part. I changed my categorising system a few times, before I discovered a system that works efficient *for me*.

I stored (part of) my music collection in iTunes. I divided my tango DJ-ing relevant music into 9 categories:

0 - Cortina's & soundbites

1 – Candombe

2 – Milonga

3 – Special

4 – Tango

5 – Tango milonga

6 – 'Neofusion'

7 – Valse

8 – Tango nuevo

In iTunes you can choose from 36 categorising options (Apple J), which should be enough ☺.

I use the following options:

– Name (of song): *La Tormenta (\*X)*

– Artist: *Canaro, Francisco*

– Time: *2:36*

– Album: *La cumparsita*

– Genre: *4 - Tango*

– Year: *1938*

– Composer: *E. S. Discépolo*

– Remarks: *Vocal: ?*

This example needs some explanation:

- In the name category I use (\*X); which means that this song contains special instruments or soundeffects. I also use (\*V) and (\*M). This refers to special valse and milonga versions, which I don't categorise under 6 – Valse or 2 – Milonga.

- I categorise on surname, followed by Christian name. There are just too many Roberto, Juan and Francisco's to do it the opposite way. It would become too chaotic for me. For the same reason I deleted suffixes like *y su Orquesta Tipica* and the like. Information like this is usually incorporated into the album title.

- I think year is an important piece of information. Year can tell you something about the sound quality, but more important: a lot of orchestras evolve over the years. Canaro and Di Sarli are good examples of orchestras which did change their music enormously over the decades.

- In the remarks field I noted whether a song is instrumental or vocal (and if so: name of singer). Unfortunately a lot of tango CD's offer rather poor or incorrect liner notes.

This example and its explanation are meant as a inspiration for you to invent your own system, which works well for you. With some creativity you can build your own system. But do keep in mind that too many categories will confuse you, which will damage the functionality of your categorising system.

## 8 Troubleshooting

The technical part of laptop DJ-ing can cause you a lot of problems. On the internet there are some discussions going on about laptop DJ-ing and especially the problems in getting good sound. Some DJ's don't succeed in getting a good sound. And since you work with recordings at least half a century old, an even less sound quality is not something you want.

In the friends of el corte discussion (end of 2006) some problems came up. Michiel answered questions about internal sound problems.

### *Internal sound problems*

Firstly, for intermitted playback on random spots: there is not enough RAM available for playback.<sup>77</sup> When you've got 256MB or less RAM in your rig; add more. 512MB RAM is in a lot of cases a kind of minimum for smooth use. When you've got that already; build a start-up version with nothing else than iTunes. With Windows XP a lot of installed programmes are automatically loaded on start-up. This can clog your available RAM. To make it "rock-solid" run it lean & mean.

Secondly, for intermitted playback and weird noises that always connected to the same moment in the music: this can be caused by bad coded MP3. The solution is to re-import the songs preferable from original CD's. If you're going to re-import; consider this: MP3 is the most universal (easy exchange with others) but not the best quality. If you want to use MP3 try or the iTunes converter (not the best but already there easy & trustworthy) or LAME (better quality but more

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<sup>77</sup> RAM means random access memory. This is a method of storing data, which enables integrated circuits to access data randomly. So every place in the external memory is as easily accessible as another.

things to set up and slower).<sup>78</sup> OGG/FLAC/AAC are better quality but not everybody has standard playback for it (OGG/FLAC not on an iPod for example).<sup>79</sup>

Finally, for hum & noises related to hard disk and/or mouse activity: this can be caused by a bad soundcard or mainboard design. You could try the Griffin iMic USB soundcard or try to run on battery.

### *Ground loop*

Another problem is when an audio system produces a low monitor buzz. This can indicate a ground loop. This can be fixed by a ground loop isolator.

In electricity a **ground loop** refers to a electric current (which is generally not desired), in a conductor connecting two points that are supposed to be at the same potential (ground), but are actually at different potentials. Ground loops can harm a electrical system; in this case your audio equipment.<sup>80</sup>

## 9 Conclusion

Laptop DJ-ing has a lot of advantages but also some disadvantages. If you DJ regularly you will earn back your investment within a few years. On the other side it will cost you quite some time to import and label your music.

There are a lot of music/DJ programs with all kind of fancy options, which you don't need for tango DJ-ing. DJ-ing with a laptop does presume that you are not 100% a-technical.

## 10 Acknowledgements

As far as I know there is only one coherent story about tango DJ-ing with a laptop: Tipps für den Tango-Notebook-DJ, Teil I & II, which is written by Jonas Luell in 2005. You can find it at [www.tangoinfo.ch](http://www.tangoinfo.ch).

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<sup>78</sup> LAME is a MPEG-1 audio layer 3 (MP3) encoder. *LAME* is an acronym for *LAME Ain't an MP3 Encoder*.

<sup>79</sup> OGG is connected with Ogg Vorbis, which implies an open source-method of data compression (audio files), which is free of copyrights. FLAC means free lossless audio codec.

<sup>80</sup> For more info on ground loops: [www.epanorama.net](http://www.epanorama.net).

Luell describes hardware (laptop, sound card, cabbles) and software (program and audio files). Also some DJ forums do touch on this subject. For the rest this story is based on conversations with other laptop tango DJ's and our common sense. For technical details I also conulted Wikipedia UK and [www.epanorama.net](http://www.epanorama.net).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Wikipedia UK: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) and Wikipedia NL: <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoofdpagina>. For technical only: de Free On-Line Dictionary Of Computing (<http://foldoc.org/>

## D Important tango orchestras

In this appendix we will list some tango orchestras that are 'inlvidable' and should be in every tango DJ's toolkit. These orchestra's are:

- **Alfredo de Angelis** made energetic and rhythmical music, which will always be appreciated by dancers. His music is multilayered, which makes it interesting for all levels of dancers. Recommended CD's: From Argentina to the world and Adios Marinero (EBCD).
- **Carlos Di Sarli** started his career with fast, rhythmical music but switched in 1944 to a slower, majestic type of music. Recommended CD's: Instrumentales volume 1 & 2 (Tango Argentino) and RCA Victor's 100 anos (BMG).
- **Juan D'Arienzo** lured dancers back to the dance floor at the end of the thirties, after tango in twenties and thirties had become more and more artistic than danceable (the decarean school of tango). Recommended CD's: Tango para el mundo & Sus primeros exitos volume 1 & 2 (Tango Argentino) and La Cumparsita (EBCD).
- **Anibal Troilo** made powerful and hard-to-resist-to-dance-to tango music with virtuoso melodies and harmonies. Most of his music is very good to dance to, but in the sixties he also made big bombastic music, which is hard to dance to. Recommended CD's: El inmortal "Pichuco" (EBCD), Anibal Troilo y sus cantores (RCA Victor 100 anos, BMG) and Instrumental 1941-1944 (Tango Argentino).
- **Oswaldo Pugliese** was a great musical innovator. With *Recuerdo* (1921) and *La Yumba* (1943) he surprised his audience and set an example for generations of musicians. His music is big and powerful and invites dancers to dance "big". Sometimes Pugliese's music is too chaotic to dance to. Recommended CD's: From Argentina to the world, *Ausencia* (EMI), *15 grandes exitos* (Blue Moon) and *Recuerdo* (EBCD).
- **Francisco Canaro's** career is probably one of the longest from tango's history (from ca 1916 to 1964), although there are more musicians who had very long careers (Pugliese, Piazzolla and Troilo). Canaro and Roberto Firpo were the icons of the guardia vieja. Canaro's music is very diverse because he was not averse from "eclectic borrowing" of other musicians inside and outside

tango's territory. Recommended CD's: From Argentina to the world, Tangos inolvidables and Bailande tangos, valeses y milongas (Reliquias).

- **Roberto Firpo**, the autodidactic piano player, arranger and band-leader often played in smaller ensembles. His style can be described as very rhythmical and energetic. Firpo introduced La Cumparsita to the world. The older Firpo's are in tango-milonga style, music from the thirties. His milongas are excellent for salons. Recommended CD's: Alma de Bohemio, Miilonga Orilero (both EBCD), De la guardia vieja and Tangos y valsecitos volume 2 (both Reliquias).
- And there are many more: Quinteto Piricho (Canaro), Enrique Rodriguez, Angel D'Agostino, Lucio Demare, Edgar Donato, Domingo Federico, Miguel Villasboas, Horacio Salgan, Juan Maglio, Pedro Maffia, Francini & Pontier, Alberto Castillo, Ricardo Tanturi, Francisco Lomuto, Florindo Sassone, Osmar Maderna, Adolfo Carabelli, Orquesta Tipica Victor, Los Tubatango and countless other musicians, singers and orchestra's.

## E Tango timeline & trends in tango music

### Tango timeline

#### 1880 – 1917: Prehistory & la guardia vieja

- ca.1880: crystallisation of tango
- major sources: habanera, candombe and rural milonga and several indigenous and Afro-European influences
- tango as a primarily improvised form of music and dance (cortes and quebradas)
- musical line ups mostly duo's and trio's, which are regularly changing
- clearly distinct European influences in music
- hardly any singing (only some refrains), and if there is any singing the lyrics are rather vulgar but at the beginning of the twentieth century they lose their vulgarity
- tango has a bad reputation: the reptile from the brothels
- instruments are guitar, flute, violin and only incidentally a bandoneon
- compositions are simple
- mostly amateur musicians, with little or no musical education
- sheet music gains popularity in first decade of the century
- first tango recordings around 1910
- still vaguely detectable (south) European and African influences in tango music
- 1912: Greco forms first orquesta tipica
- 1917: Gardel introduces tango cancion

#### 1917 – 1935: La guardia nueva

- disappearance of flute and guitar, which are replaced by piano, bass and bandoneon
- standard musical line becomes orquesta tipica
- orquesta tipicas make more complex compositions possible
- musicians are professional, as sons of immigrants do often get a musical education
- room for improvisation disappeared

- European influences disappeared from tango
- during the twenties the radio as a mass communication medium, comes into existence in Argentina and gains a lot of popularity at the cost of the record industry
- from 1928 the record industry uses electrical recordings and wins back some of the ground it lost
- two streams in tango music: traditional & evolutionary school
- evolutionary school causes lessening popularity of dancing
- focus of orchestras starts to move from dancers to listeners
- 1935: death of Gardel and appearance of D'Arienzo
- D'Arienzo makes energetic music which goes back to composition of la guardia vieja
- other orchestras, like Di Sarli and Troilo, follow D'Arienzo's rhythmic style and play more energetically
- average rhythm also becomes a little quicker
- at the end of this decade focus shifts back a little to the dancers

### **1935 – 1954: La epoca de oro**

- gran orquestas because of economic wealth (WW II)
- compositions become more and more complex
- incredible accumulation of talent in a relatively short period
- example: Calo's Orchestra of the Stars which hosted at one time or other: Salgan, Maderna, Francini, Pontier, Pugliese, etc.
- average rhythm slows down a little (perhaps because of the complexity of the music)
- end of la guardia nueva (economic decline and emerging youth culture)
- music becomes more and more symphonic
- almost complete disappearance of tango as a dance
- Piazzolla goes to Paris

### **1954 – 1978: Tango Nuevo**

- traditional tango goes underground and becomes a marginal phenomenon
- some orchestra survive, but often in a trimmed down set up
- a lot of orchestra fold up and musicians withdrew from the music scene

- Piazzolla combines tango with classical music and jazz and thereby creates tango nuevo
- tango nuevo gains some credit in Europe, Asia and Northern America
- tango remains 'invisible' in Argentina

### **1978 – 2000: La joven guardia**

- gradual recognition of tango nuevo as an innovating force in tango
- junta causes a lot of musicians to flee to Europe (Paris), where slowly a new tango scene comes to life
- renaissance of tango starts with Tango Argentino tour around the world
- in Europe there slowly grows a tango scene, which gives tango in Argentina a new impulse
- death of Piazzolla and Pugliese
- technically outstanding music, but compared to la epoca de oro lacking in emotional depth and more for listening than for dancing

### **2000 - ? Neotango**

- the use of modern digital computer and sampling techniques meet tango and give it an energetic impulse
- 2000: Gotan Project produces La revancha del tango
- Gotan causes a lot of copy cat bands to produce neotango music, of which only a few do really add something new to neotango genre
- future of tango: hard to predict

## II Trends in tango music

- Origin

Tango as a form of dance and music originated in the **lower socio economic classes** and gradually was accepted by higher socio economical classes.

- Afro-European influence

The **Afro-European influences** in tango music disappeared as tango grew more sophisticated. In the twenties there were hardly any afro-European influences left. Tango had become Argentinean.

- Musical line up

The **musical lines up** changed from duo's & trio's (in the beginning of the twentieth century) via sexteto & orquesta tipica's (in the twenties and thirties) to gran orquesta's (in the forties & early fifties). After la epoca de oro (mid fifties) several musical line ups were used, but generally the line ups were mineralized due to the drop in popularity tango suffered from the emerging youth culture.

- Instrumental & Vocal

In the beginning tango's were primarily **instrumental**, but starting early twenties tango's were increasingly accompanied by **singer(s)**.

- Amateurs & professionals

As the evolution of tango music progressed (**professionalization**), the musical compositions got more sophisticated.

- Improvisation

As a consequence of the growing complexity of compositions, the opportunity for **improvisation** by musicians in orchestra disappeared completely and was replaced by rigidly composed structures.

- Instrumentation

As the evolution of tango music progressed, the **musical instrumentation** grew bigger and bigger.

## F Copyright & DJ-ing

What about copyright on music?<sup>82</sup> Do you have to pay if you DJ somewhere? Do you have to pay if you have dancschool? And what happens if you don't pay dues when you should have done so? These are important questions, because they can have a great impact.

In most cases a DJ is asked to DJ by other parties. These other parties can include dancschools, milonga organizers, festival bureaus, restaurants, pubs, etc. In the Netherlands the other parties are the ones who should pay copyrights to Buma Stemra. As long as you don't have an exclusive relation with one of the other parties mentioned, a DJ doesn't have to pay copyrights.

On Buma Stemra's website (Dutch copyright organization) you will find the prices for using music. These prices can vary, depending on who is the organizing party. For pubs and restaurants there are different prices compared to parties who organize an event. The price can be downloaded via the Buma Stemra site (brochures: *Muziek gebruiken in de horeca en Opgaveformulier evenementen*).

When I contacted the Buma Stemra in 2004 (Jury Brantenaar) I was told that a DJ only is responsible for the paying of the copyright dues when he is an organizer of an event. Not paying a due can imply a substantial fine.

Some situations are free of copyright:

- private use for party
- if the composer has been dead for 70 years or more

If you want to know more about copyrights, we refer to the following websites:

- **Buma Stemra**

<http://www.bumastemra.nl/nl-NL/Auteursrecht/>

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<sup>82</sup> In this appendix I will discuss the consequences of copyrights for tango DJ's in the Netherlands only. However if you have information on copyrights on music in relation to DJ-ing in other countries, please send it to me: [a.degraaff@hetnet.nl](mailto:a.degraaff@hetnet.nl).

Buma Stemra is a Dutch organization which deals with the controlling of the Dutch Auteurswet 1912. Via this link you can:

- find info on the hows and whys of copyright, what Buma Stemra does and international regulations / conventions.
  - download several brochures which are relevant for the use of music in restaurants, pubs and dancsschools.
  - find links to international copyrights organizations, like BIEM, CISAC en CESAC.
  - find the complete text of the Dutch Auteurswet (from 1912)  
[http://www.ivir.nl/wetten/nl/auteurswet\\_01\\_04\\_2006.html](http://www.ivir.nl/wetten/nl/auteurswet_01_04_2006.html)
- **Wikipedia**

Wikipedia is an internet encyclopedia, which is made and maintained by thousands of volunteers. Since there is no guarantee that the Wikipedia info is right or wrong, you should be careful in using these data.

- <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auteursrecht> gives info on Dutch Auteursrecht.
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright> gives extensive info on English copyright regulations..

## More

Here you will find some links to international regulations on copyright

- Berner convention (1886)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berne\\_Convention\\_for\\_the\\_Protection\\_of\\_Literary\\_and\\_Artistic\\_Works](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berne_Convention_for_the_Protection_of_Literary_and_Artistic_Works)
- Universal Copyright Convention (1952)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal\\_Copyright\\_Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Copyright_Convention)
- Rome Convention (1962)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome\\_Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome_Convention)
- WTO conventie (1992)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agreement\\_on\\_TradeRelated\\_Aspects\\_of\\_Intellectual\\_Property\\_Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agreement_on_TradeRelated_Aspects_of_Intellectual_Property_Rights)
- WIPO (1996)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WIPO\\_Copyright\\_Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WIPO_Copyright_Treaty)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WIPO\\_Performances\\_and\\_Phonograms\\_Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WIPO_Performances_and_Phonograms_Treaty)

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