A Performer’s Guide to Astor Piazzolla's *Tango-Études pour flûte seule*: An Analytical Approach

Asis Reyes
*The Graduate Center, City University of New York*

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A PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO ASTOR PIAZZOLLA’S TANGO-ÉTUDES POUR FLÛTE

SEULE: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH

by

ASIS A. REYES

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, The City University of New York

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by

Asis A. Reyes

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

A Performer’s Guide to Astor Piazzolla's *Tango-Études pour flûte seule*:
An Analytical Approach

by

Asis A. Reyes

Advisor: Antoni Pizà

**Abstract/Description**

This dissertation aims to give performers deeper insight into the style of the *Tango-Études pour flûte seule* and tango music in general as they seek to learn and apply tango performance conventions to the *Tango-Études* and other tango works. Significant research elements of this dissertation include a complete analysis of phrasing, tonality, and formal structure and how these relate to performance in each of the six *Tango-Études* and an examination of Piazzolla’s compositional use of descending chromatic chords and implied descending lines; my reductions of this voice leading as it appears in the *Tango-Études* are exclusive to this dissertation. This dissertation is divided into five chapters and an appendix. Chapter one presents background information about Piazzolla and his serious works and a review of literature pertaining to this dissertation. Chapter two examines the history of tango with a focus on its settings and the flute’s role in it. Chapter three provides analysis of fraseo, rhythm, form, rubato, ornamentation, and improvisation and how musicians might implement these parameters in their performances. Chapter four offers formal and stylistic analysis of each *Tango-Étude* and gives interpretative suggestions based on analysis of form, harmony, phrase-structures, motives, thematic development, and implied textures. The appendix comprises a series of interviews with tango musicians who worked alongside Piazzolla. This dissertation opens new avenues of scholarship in the analysis, performance, and style of the music of Astor Piazzolla, and I hope that subsequent research will address his chamber works.
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I am especially grateful to Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris for granting me permission to reproduce sections of solo flute version of the *Tango-Etudes* by Astor Piazzolla © Copyright Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris. Hélène Quinery, licensing and copyrights agent at Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris, was instrumental in this process, and I am grateful for her assistance. I am also indebted to the knowledge, performance experience and insight the interviewees provided for this study. They made this work come to life. I extend my special thanks to Claudio Barile, Gary Burton, and Daniel Binelli. You made this dissertation shine.

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A mis padres
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INTRODUCTION

The tango was never the music of the people. One proof of this is that they never danced the tango in the tenement buildings here. And the tenements were where you could find the representative people of Buenos Aires. . . . No, the tango would be the music of the bawdy house, of the brothel. And the people rejected it, naturally.

-Jorge Luis Borges

As interest in Astor Piazzolla’s music continues to grow, there has arisen a crucial need for information that will help classically trained instrumentalists better understand and perform his works. To date, a dearth of information on style and performance practice of either traditional or new tango music has been available; this is also true of Piazzolla’s music. Limited materials exist on the composer’s chamber works, and similarly little research has been done on his flute works, the Histoire du tango and the Tango-Études pour flûte seule. This dissertation will help fill this gap.

The Tango-Études, one of Piazzolla’s new tango compositions, are written in a style unfamiliar to most conservatory-trained musicians, who will benefit from such a study as I have undertaken here. Indeed, it is my hope that, having forged a new avenue of current scholarship, subsequent research will address his chamber works in greater depth and scope than is possible here.

The central topic of this dissertation is an analysis of the music, style, and performance practice of the Tango-Études. These six études are well-written for the flute and are well-marked per classical music conventions. Often, musicians approach these Études by learning them as well as they can before performing them as accurately they can with as much expressivity as they

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can muster. This means learning all the notes and rhythms and strictly following the composers’ instructions found in the music (dynamics, expression marks, etc.).

This approach, while doubtlessly a solid start, is not enough. Tango musicians frequently employ performance practices of which many classically trained musicians are unaware, practices which have more in common with jazz and Baroque music than with contemporary classical technique. The approach used when learning the *Tango-Études* should bear similarity to that used by Baroque or period specialists when they learn works by Bach or Telemann; the written notation in both tango and Baroque music serves as a basic guide to the music, but it does not provide complete instructions for how the music should sound or be performed. There are stylistic factors and performance practices not present in the written music that make a performance more meaningful, and these mannerisms and practices must be considered before a convincing performance can be achieved.

It is these stylistic mannerisms and conventions that are at the heart of this study. It is the goal of this dissertation to bring forth into the light those mannerisms and practices and to demonstrate how musicians can apply them to the *Tango-Études*.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters: “Chapter One: Tango, New Tango and Astor Piazzolla,” “Chapter Two: History of the Flute in Tango Music,” “Chapter Three: A Performer’s Guide to Tango Music,” “Chapter Four: Analysis,” and “Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion.” In addition, there is a brief introduction and appendix.

Chapter one begins with biographical information about the composer, his musical training, and his compositional output outside of tango bands, specifically his serious works. This chapter also provides more information on the stylistic characteristics of *nuevo tango* (new
tango) and introduces readers to the *Tango-Études*. Furthermore, a review of the biographical and historical literature pertaining to the performance practice of tango music is provided.

Chapter two focuses on the flute’s role in the history of tango music and the functions and settings of tango music. These topics are explored through a framework of 4 periods: the initial stage of tango (1870-1900), the *guardia vieja* or “old guard” (1900-1930), and the golden era (1930s-1960s), culminating in the development of Piazzolla’s *nuevo tango*, or new tango (1960-1990). Over the course of these three periods, tango evolved from a mainstay of Buenos Aires brothels to become the primary symbol of Argentine culture.

Chapter three analyzes different musical elements universal to all tangos, including fraseo, rhythm, form, breathing, rubato, and ornamentation. The interpretation of these elements defines the style. This chapter covers in detail how classical musicians should execute these parameters in a performance setting.

Chapter four presents a formal and stylistic analysis of each of the six *Tango-Études*. Interpretative suggestions are offered based on the analysis of form, harmony, phrase-structures, motives, thematic development, and implied textures. The formal analysis will provide an additional tool to help performers fully grasp the intricacies found in the structure of Piazzolla’s complex and often difficult music. This analysis will enrich a performer’s knowledge of Piazzolla’s new tango style by clarifying matters of form, phrase, harmony, and texture.

The appendix consists of interviews with performers who worked with Astor Piazzolla. These include Daniel Binelli (bandoneón), Gary Burton (vibraphone), and Claudio Barile (flute). In my interviews with these musicians, they share their thoughts and experiences as to how classically trained musicians should approach style, interpretation, and performance of the *Tango-Études*. 

3
I chose to write about the *Tango-Études* to address some of the unique challenges they present to classically trained flutists. As a classically trained flutist, I have studied and performed all of them. My initial approach to learning and performing these works was primarily a technical one: I would learn the notes, rhythm, and expression marks. My second approach was to treat these works as I would any other piece of classical music; in other words, I sought to play them as expressively as possible. For a while, and like so many other classically trained flutists, I considered these approaches sufficient; however, after performing them many times, and after hearing tango musicians play these works, I began to realize that my interpretation lacked the historical, cultural, and stylistic connection tango has to the city of Buenos Aires.

The watershed moment for me came in 2002, when I had the opportunity to play a few tango concerts in New York with a Uruguayan colleague from the CUNY Graduate Center. His interpretations of the music intrigued me to say the least. His playing was moving, expressive, and interesting. He often changed the melody by altering the rhythms, notes, and registration and adding rubato. He encouraged me to do the same, but I did not know how.

Even though we did not play any of the *Tango-Études* during these concerts, I wanted to learn how to play as musically as him. I studied the recordings of Piazzolla, Pugliese, and Salgán, as well recordings of classical musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma and Gidon Kremer. I realized that while the recordings made by classically trained musicians were technically superb, they lacked the more dramatic gestures, sudden tempo changes, rubato, and the freer, almost improvised feel of the Argentine musicians.

My journey with tango began as an effort to grasp the essence of the music. This dissertation is the culmination of my research up to this point. I now wish to inform other classical musicians about the tango style and help them realize more authentic performances of
these works. The *Tango-Études* are not only art music but also popular music that emanate from the culture of Buenos Aires. I hope this dissertation will help other musicians make the connection between city and music that once eluded me.
CHAPTER ONE

TANGO, NEW TANGO, AND ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

The rum, the milonga, the women, Rosendo talking tough and slapping each of us on the back, which to me was a real sign of friendship—well, I was happy as could be. I had a good partner, too, who was having an easy time following my steps. The tango took hold of us, driving us along, splitting us up, then bringing us together again.

-Jorge Luis Borges

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992), one of the most important Latin American composers of the 20th century, is remembered chiefly for his compositions, arrangements, and performances within the tango style. Tango, a popular dance style that originated in the bars and brothels of Buenos Aires in the late part of the nineteenth century, developed under the influence of European, African, and Caribbean music and dance genres (Argentine milonga, Uruguayan candombe, Cuban habanera, etc.). Tango music is rhythmically distinct and characteristically performed by an orquesta típica, an established ensemble including a bandoneón, with piano, violin, double bass, and guitar.

Piazzolla, born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, spent most of his childhood in New York City after immigrating there with his parents. While living in New York City, the young Piazzolla was exposed to diverse musical styles ranging from classical concert music to jazz, and it was during this period of his life that Piazzolla began to learn to play the bandoneón. He

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2 The bandoneón is a free-reed instrument similar to the concertina, invented in Germany in the 1840s by Heinrich Band (1821-1860). It became the quintessential instrument in tango bands.
returned to Argentina at the age of 16 to work as a *tanguero*, or professional tango musician. There, he nourished his ambition to become a composer of concert art music, studying under Alberto Ginastera before moving to Paris to study under Nadia Boulanger.

Boulanger persuaded Piazzolla that tango was essential to his voice as a composer, and from then on he devoted himself to the creation of *tango nuevo*, a novel style of concert tango in which traditional tango was infused with strong influences drawn from jazz and classical concert music. Though Piazzolla concentrated most of his musical efforts on the creation of this new tango, he also continued to perform and arrange traditional tango as well as develop his talents in other genres.³

Piazzolla’s works include chamber and orchestral scores. His orchestral scores, such as *Buenos Aires* (1951), *Sinfonietta* (1953), *Serie de tangos sinfónicos* (1963), *Suite del este* (1980), *Concierto para bandoneón y guitarra* (1985), *Concierto para bandoneón* (1988), and *Tres tangos for bandoneón and orchestra* (1988), and *María de Buenos Aires* (1968), have not yet become familiar to musicians and audiences in the United States.⁴ His numerous chamber works, on the other hand, are better-known, due in no small part to the recent efforts of well-established classical musicians and ensembles such as Yo-Yo Ma, Gidon Kremer, the Kronos String Quartet, and the Assad Brothers, each of whom has released recordings of Piazzolla’s chamber music in recent years.

Piazzolla’s *tango nuevo* brought new life to the traditional tango. By incorporating compositional techniques such as ambiguous tonality, pedal tones, frequent meter changes,

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³ In addition to tango music, Piazzolla experimented with jazz and rock music. He performed and recorded with Gary Burton and Gerry Mulligan among others.
⁴ There have been a few revivals of *María de Buenos Aires* in New York City; for example, violinist Gidon Kremer and his ensemble Kremerata Musica presented a concert version with vocalists at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in October of 1998. Also, the Gotham Chamber Orchestra staged a production at Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in September of 2007.
polyphonic structures, extreme chromaticism, atonality, and influences from jazz and rock, Piazzolla expanded upon traditional tango while still retaining its general form. He also challenged traditional tango by embracing new ensemble combinations, composing works for solo flute, flute and guitar, string quartets, and orchestra.

Piazzolla’s innovations in the tango style are illustrated in works such as *María de Buenos Aires* (1968), *Suite Punta del Este* (1981), and *Balada para un loco* (1969). In the small opera *María de Buenos Aires*, which the composer often referred to it as an “operita”, he extends the standard tango quintet of bandoneón, piano, violin, guitar, and bass to include additional orchestral instruments such as the viola, cello, flute, vibraphone, xylophone, and an additional guitar. In “Fugue” from *Suite Punta del Este*, Piazzolla adapts the tango style to a fugal form, and in *Balada para un loco*, a work for vocalist and small orchestra (in some editions with piano), he blurs the boundaries of tango beyond recognition; only 30 of its 110 measures are in the standard tango 4/4 time while the remainder are in 3/4 waltz time, and at times the work demands that the vocalist shouts rather than sings, an uncommon notation in tango.5

EXAMPLE 1.1 *Balada para un loco*, mm. 73-80, waltz

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Piazzolla’s innovations in tango might have broadened its listener base, but for all its changes to traditional tango, Piazzolla’s music was met with resistance. According to María Susana Azzi and Simon Collier, “Piazzolla took tango music (like jazz, a tradition with murky origins) and turned it into a form of contemporary chamber music. He broke with the traditional tango—ossifying in the 1950s after its thirty years of hegemony as Buenos Aires’ popular music—and for this he was never forgiven by traditionalists.”

**The Tango-Études pour flûte seule**

The six *Tango-Études pour flûte seule*, concert pieces in tango form for unaccompanied flute or, alternatively, violin, were composed toward the end of Piazzolla’s career in 1987. These compositions stand out in the composer’s œuvre as unique. To be sure, he composed other works for solo instruments, such as *Cuatro piezas breves* (1944) for piano and *Mi loco bandoneón* and *Pedro y Pedro* (1981) for bandoneón, but these instruments allow for a polyphonic or chordal texture. In *Pedro y Pedro*, a work dedicated to two great bandoneónists of the 1940s whom the composed admired, Pedro Láurenz (1902-1972) and Pedro Maffia (1899-1967), the chordal texture is pervasive throughout the work as seen in the following musical example:

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The *Tango-Études*, in contrast, are his only composition for an unaccompanied purely melodic instrument, and to my knowledge the only one ever attempted by a tango composer. When composing the flute studies, Piazzolla had to grapple with similar problems faced by J. S. Bach in his unaccompanied works for flute, violin, and cello.

In addition to their uniqueness, the *Tango-Études* are also a recognizable example of *tango nuevo*, notable for their tonal ambiguity, frequent metrical changes and implied polyphonic texture akin to the Baroque *style brisé*. The following musical example shows both the aforementioned meter changes and the *style brisé*.

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For a long time now, their quality has been widely appreciated by flutists and violinists alike. Indeed, they have become part of the standard repertoire for both instruments in recent years, being much more popular than Piazzolla’s works for solo bandoneón, even though the bandoneón is the quintessential tango instrument. In addition, the pieces have appealed to saxophonists, clarinetists, oboists, and pianists, for whom Henry Lemoine has published many arrangements.

The Tango-Études are not the most technically challenging flute études. Études by Joachim Andersen (1847-1909), Theobald Boehm (1794-1881), and Jean-Louis Tulou (1786-1865) surpass Piazzolla’s Études in technical difficulty. However, the Tango-Études do elicit a set of unique performance issues that are not found in these other works. For example, most of Étude no. 1 is written in the lower and middle octaves where a convincing execution of fortissimo, staccatissimo and accents is almost impossible. In light of this difficulty, how might a performer render a convincing impression of these effects? Similar difficulties can be found in the technical challenges presented by modern works such as Edgard Varèse’s Density 21.5 where nuances in color changes, sharp articulations, and drastic dynamic changes in the low and middle range are also required.

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8 To my knowledge, only one commercial recording of Mi loco bandoneón is available, and there are no recordings of Pedro y Pedro. In contrast, there are nine recordings of the Études played on either the flute or violin.
9 Clarinetists use the alto saxophone part and oboists use the flute part. The saxophone and flute part are identical.
10 All were renowned flutists from the mid- to late-19th century. Andersen was a Danish flutist and the first principal flutist of the Berlin Philharmonic. Boehm is the inventor of the modern flute and Tulou was a flute professor at the Paris Conservatoire. All of these performers wrote flute methods still in use today.
registers need to be exaggerated in order to portray a convincing performance.\textsuperscript{11} The following example from \textit{Density 21.5} shows these extreme dynamic changes and articulations similar to passages found in the \textit{Tango-Études}.

EXAMPLE 1.4 Excerpt from Edgard Varèse’s \textit{Density 21.5}

\begin{musicexample}
\begin{music}
\newclef {treble}
\begin{musicnotes}
\bar {1} & F'B' - F' - E'B' - F' \rightarrow \text{(sharply articulated)} \rightarrow \text{F'} - F'B' - F' \rightarrow \text{F'} - F'B' - F' \rightarrow \text{F'} - F'B' - F' \\
\end{musicnotes}
\end{music}
\end{musicexample}

Another kind of problem is that of achieving an idiomatic performance style. The classic tango players, like Piazzolla himself, learned to play the style orally by performing in tango bands and listening to recordings. Nuances in style vary per the era and \textit{orquesta típica}, often closely related to an individual composer. Aside from immersion in the style, how can the conservatory-trained flutist capture these nuances in Piazzolla’s work? Some of these issues, such as breathing and tango improvisation, can be discussed on a purely technical level.

Breathing is fundamental to Piazzolla’s \textit{Études}. His use of breath marks is pervasive and intentional in all the \textit{Tango-Études}. Often these breaths are not needed and are marked in awkward places. Is there a need to take a breath after almost every beat in a fast tempo, as is often indicated? Piazzolla suggests that the performer perceive the breath marks as guidance in how to attack the notes in a manner similar to a bandonist. He says, “It is advisable that the

performer should well exaggerate the accents and respirations, therefore inspiring the way of which tangos are played on the bandoneón.”

Piazzolla discouraged improvisation or modification of the harmony in his music. However, he did allow for other forms of expression such as alterations of the rhythms, careful ornamentation of the melody, and rubato. The Tango-Études contain many repeated passages, but these passages do not sound identical when played because Piazzolla ornamented them differently in each reiteration. By closely studying these passages, the performer will understand how Piazzolla ornamented his own music.

Rubato is an integral part of tango music. It is seldom written in the score, but it should always be present. Tango performers can take liberties with tempo and the rhythmic value of an individual note, even going so far as to change the rhythm of an entire passage. In this regard, Richard Pinnell, a scholar well-acquainted with South American musical practices, comments: “Piazzolla’s tangos are extremely chromatic and expressive…. [The performer must] interpret them with a maximum of dynamic and tonal range, with tinges of vibrato and rubato, and all without losing continuity.”

**Scholarly literature to date**

Since Piazzolla’s death in 1992, there has been a growing scholarly interest in his life and works. Most of the research, however, has been biographical and historical in nature. The literature available in English is limited but includes the major biographical volume by María Susana Azzi and Simon Collier mentioned earlier. Important works published in Spanish in

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13 Azzi and Collier, Le Grand Tango, 159.
15 Azzi and Collier, Le Grand Tango.
Argentina include an early biography by Alberto Speratti from 1969 in addition to relevant works by Natalio Gorin, Diana Piazzolla, and Carlos Kuri, among others. Studies of Piazzolla’s compositional techniques by Allan Atlas, Ramón Pelinski, and Horacio Ferrer highlight the importance of such works as *Adiós Nonino* (1959), *María de Buenos Aires* (1968), and *Balada para un loco* (1969). Among the few works that treat style, provide analysis, and make suggestions per the performance practices of tango music are articles by Ulrich Krämer, Gabriela Mauriño, and Luis Caruana.¹⁶

Chris Dorsey’s dissertation, “Guarango como guitarra en tango: the rise, fall, and rebirth of the guitar in the Argentinean tango,”¹⁷ is a comprehensive study of the history of the guitar in tango music. It covers the guitar’s rise to prominence as well as its subsequent fall and resurrection in tango music. In addition, Dorsey lists guitarists and explicates their role in the development of tango. Lastly, Dorsey’s dissertation discusses a few written transcriptions of popular tangos by these famous players.

Coincidentally, the flute follows a similar trajectory as the guitar in the history of tango. Both instruments were initially predominant in the early style, and both were later replaced by other instruments only to re-emerge in tango ensembles, especially in Piazzolla’s. Thus, even though Dorsey’s dissertation is neither an in-depth analysis nor study of tango performance practices as they pertain to either flute or guitar, it remains relevant to the study of the history of the flute in tango music.

The article “Interpreting the tango music of Astor Piazzolla” by Gabriela Mauriño is pertinent to this dissertation for its focus on the execution, style, and interpretation of certain

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¹⁶ See full bibliography.
tango techniques such as *arrastres* (a term which translates as “dragging” or “slide”), *yumba* (emphasis on beats 2 and 4)\(^{18}\), and *bordoneos* (ornamentation of a bass line or accompaniment). These techniques are commonly practiced by *tangueros* (tango musicians) yet largely unknown to musicians unfamiliar with the style, and Mauriño’s article is sensitive to this fact.\(^{19}\) Mauriño’s target audience is not musicologists, theorists, or tangueros but classical musicians seeking an introduction to performance in both the traditional and new tango styles.

In her article, Mauriño focuses much of her attention on tango’s swing. She believes that tango derives this swing from its accentuation of beats one and three. For Mauriño, this stress is so essential to tango’s swing that its absence precludes tango status.\(^{20}\) Example 1.5 demonstrates the accentuation to which Mauriño refers:

**EXAMPLE 1.5 Tango accentuation**

Another aspect of tango music to which Mauriño attributes swing is the unique way in which articulations are employed by tangueros. In tango music, articulations are often unwritten, but this does not imply that they should be absent from performance. The assumption behind their exclusion is that the tango performer will add them at his or her own discretion to enhance

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18 An onomatopoeia that describes the rhythmic accompaniment of Pugliese’s orchestra which places emphasis on the weak beats of 2 and 4, thus the word (yum-BA yum-BA). For more information, see Alejandro Drago, “Instrumental Tango Idioms in the Symphonic Works and Orchestral Arrangements of Astor Piazzolla. Performance and Notational Problems: A Conductor’s Perspective” (2008), 93.
the expressiveness of a passage; ideally, these articulations also emphasize beats one and three.\textsuperscript{21}

The following example demonstrates various ways in which musicians can add articulations to make a passage more dramatic.

\begin{center}
\textbf{EXAMPLE 1.6 Tango articulation variations}
\end{center}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example1_6.png}
\end{figure}

Finally, Mauriño emphasizes the importance of melodic ornamentation to tango’s swing. This ornamentation, common in tango, resembles the ornamentation and improvisatory techniques used by baroque specialists and jazz players in that it includes altering the rhythms, adding extra notes, and changing registration. Because most classical musicians are likely unaware of these practices, she offers suggestions on melodic manipulation, including the difficult manipulation of rhythmic rests and other rhythmic values.\textsuperscript{22} For these reasons, Mauriño’s text is invaluable to the classical musician transitioning to tango, and this utility extends to musicians from other traditions as well.

\textit{Curso de tango} or “Tango Course” by Horacio Salgán is undoubtedly one of the most comprehensive volumes on the performance practice of tango music.\textsuperscript{23} Written by one of the most illustrious tango performers, arrangers, and composers of all times, the course contains Salgán’s cogent insights into how this popular music should be played. Divided into fifteen

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 55.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 55.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Horacio Salgán, \textit{Tango Course}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, trans. Will Genz and Marisa Hurtado (Argentina: Horacio Salgán, 2001).
\end{footnotes}
chapters and an appendix, this work covers various aspects of tango theory and performance, starting with its history and evolution, classification of the various types of tango, the melody and its accompaniment, and the importance of the development of the time signature which went from duple to quadruple meter.

Even though Salgán’s book is in its second edition, neither the English nor Spanish versions are readily accessible in the United States. Originally written in Spanish, an English translation by Will Genz and Marisa Hurtado is available though it unfortunately contains grammatical flaws and mistranslations of Spanish music terminology. If the performer can look past these errors, he or she will find a book both unique and vital to musicians trying to learn the style. Reading this book will enrich any tango musician’s understanding of tango performance practices and should be part of every tango musician's library.

Salgán’s book also features several chapters on arranging and composing music, an important skillset for any tango musician. Chapters four and five are especially important to performers, for they include a technical discussion of the melody, accompaniment, counter-melody, variation, phrasing, and percussion techniques common in tango. Salgán furnishes this discussion with specific examples designed to show the reader how these musical parameters should be applied in the music. In these chapters, the element of a decisive and personal interpretation is a key point; this is perhaps what sets tango apart from other popular music: the tanguero simply cannot play the notes as written. Chapters seven, eight, and fifteen of Salgán’s book also deal with arranging and composing but shift the focus towards idiomatic performance techniques for specific instruments.

Salgán’s book bears its ripest fruits when read as a supplement to playing in a tango band. When read in this way, the book reinforces performance practices such as rubato,
accentuation, and ornamentation. Unfortunately, very few tango bands exist which one can join, a fact of which Salgán is ruefully aware. “Nowadays,” states Salgán, “it is not all easy to belong to an orchestra, considering the fact that so few can subsist. This makes it more difficult for those who want to have careers in tango music to acquire the vast knowledge necessary for playing and interpreting it. Let us not forget that the orchestras have always been the best schools for such an apprenticeship.” As a result of these difficulties, Salgán’s book often becomes one of the few resources to musicians learning the tango style. Fortunately, Salgán anticipated this, for in his book he codifies performance aspects that tango musicians of past epochs learned orally or through imitation of their experienced band members.

Curso de tango is relevant to the central point of this dissertation, for both texts share a primary focus on performance practices and the style of the music. Salgán’s book covers tango music from all eras and by various composers while concurrently using many examples of his own music. All of that information supports the central focus of this dissertation: the style and performance practice of the Tango-Études.

Another recent work which focuses on the style, performance, and technique of tango music is La flauta en el tango (The Flute in Tango Music) by Paulina Fain. Perhaps the most comprehensive method published to date, this book is a key resource for flutists and other instrumentalists wishing to learn the proper way of playing tango, for in it Fain explains in detail many performance intricacies found in the music. Paulina Fain is a well-accomplished flutist, composer, and arranger of tango music who frequently performs and presents master-classes both in Argentina and abroad.

24 Horacio Salgán, Tango Course, 15.
25 Paulina Fain, La flauta en el tango (Munich: G. Ricordi & Co., 2010).
This work has been published as a single-volume facing-page translation with an English translation presented alongside the original Spanish text. In addition, there is another edition of the book in German-French that was also published in 2010. Both editions include many musical excerpts carefully chosen from throughout tango’s history to facilitate an understanding of the text. The book is divided into four chapters: “Introduction”, “The melody”, “The ensemble”, “styles”, and “appendix”. In addition, piano scores for six of Fain’s compositions are included in the book.

Fain’s book targets musicians wishing to learn the proper way to perform tango music. As the flute is a single line instrument, the book mainly focuses on the treatment and performance of the melodic line, but it also covers accompaniment and rhythm in relation to the melody. Unlike Salgán's book, Fain’s book forgoes an explanation of arranging and composing, probably due to the non-chordal nature and function of the flute.

Even from the very first few pages, the reader will understand the importance of rhythm and expression in the music and how these elements affect the performance of the melody. Though most of the book focuses on performance of the melody and is therefore of greatest utility to players of single line instruments, instrumentalists who frequently play in the rhythm section—pianists and bandoneónists, for example—will also benefit from reading it since they sometimes play the melody either as a solo or soli or in a tutti section. Classical, jazz, and even tango players will benefit from studying this book.

Of special significance in Fain’s book is her explanation of fraseo, or the practice of playing the melody differently than what is written in the score. This might come as a surprise to some musicians, but the tango player should emphasize a certain part of the melody as he or she sees fit in order to bring out its most expressive meaning; this is usually done by altering the
rhythm, tempo, and dynamics of a melody while still trying to follow the melodic contour of the passage. Fain describes these expressive techniques in detail and explains how to apply and execute various types of fraseo. Example 1.7 shows a basic fraseo in the rhythm while still following the general contour of the melody. 

EXAMPLE 1.7  Basic fraseo

Fain’s book also introduces rhythmic melodies. These should be played without fraseo and as metronomically as possible; played in this way, they provide contrast to the rhythmic freedom found in more expressive melodies. According to Fain, these passages’ most important characteristics can be found in accent and the articulation, and Fain asserts that they should be played in a way that emphasizes the natural beats in the measure: one and three in 4/4 and one in 2/4. In addition, she gives specific suggestions to flutists on how to achieve the proper articulation, once conceived for instruments found in standard tango bands, and translate those articulations to the flute.

26 Paulina Fain, La flauta en el tango, 17.
27 Ibid., 34.
Last but not least, Fain expounds upon the stylistic manner of executing ornaments while remaining sensitive to the texture of the ensemble when in a solo or soli or in tutti passages; these ornaments include mordents, glissandi, arrastres, grace-notes, trills, and grupetti. Often these ornaments are written down, but the author also gives indication of when to add them in the melody. Fain’s book is directly associated with the topic of this dissertation since it provides instrumentalists, especially flutists, with a comprehensive approach to learning the tango style. Her book discusses in detail on how to transfer the techniques that had been pioneered by other instruments of the standard tango bands—violins, piano, bass, and bandoneón—to the flute. In this dissertation, consideration of how to apply her ideas and principles to the Tango-Études is made.

Scholarly literature pertaining to the Tango-Études indicates a growing interest, with numerous articles and dissertations published about them. Even though the Tango-Études are not mentioned in major biographies such as Azzi’s and Collier’s, Gorin’s, or Speratti’s, they are mentioned in Gabriela Maurino’s article, “Raíces tangueras de la obra de Astor Piazzolla,” in which she engages in a detailed discussion of a motive and tango technique, bordoneos, found in Étude no. 2. Diana Piazzolla’s book Astor quotes her father as expressing his love for chamber music and his wish for the Tango-Études to spread to the music conservatories around the world. In Anthology for Musical Analysis: Postmodern Update by Charles Burkhart and William Rothstein, the authors discuss the tonality of Étude no. 6 and mention its use of conventional tonality.

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29 Diana Piazzolla, Astor (Buenos Aires: Emece Editores, 1987), 223.

Generally, Vaughn’s treatment is broad in scope but limited in depth. Chapter 1 covers in general terms the formal structure of each Tango-Étude and, in some cases, corroborates my own conclusions about the formal structure of some of the Études.

However, her discussion of formal structure does not take into account the piano arrangement nor provide a detailed analysis of phrases. Discrepancies that exist between Vaughn’s and my analyses of form and tonality will be addressed for each Étude in which they occur. Additionally, Vaughn omits Études no. 2 and 3 from her discussion of how articulation is applied to the Études and Études no. 1, 5, and 6 from her classification of melodies and rhythmic feel. My dissertation will serve to fill this existing gap in the literature.

Vaughn’s dissertation introduces violinists to the classification of melodies in tango and the feeling tango music evokes in the listeners. Dr. Vaughn’s thesis provides a clear description of how the Études have become part of the violin repertoire and provides an excellent discography of violin recordings as proof. Violinists interested in learning to play these works will benefit from reading her thesis.

The other recent dissertation about Piazzolla’s Tango-Études, published in 2013, is “Constructing the authentic: approaching the ‘6 Tango-Études pour Flûte Seule’ by Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992) for interpretation and performance” by Dr. Jessica Quiñones. Quiñones
outlined several tango performance aspects as they relate to the Tango-Études. She took a large concept (rhythm, articulation, breathing, sexuality, etc), discussed it in detail, contextualized it as it relates to other tango compositions, and then interpreted it as it relates to a specific Étude. Quiñones thoroughly discussed Études no. 1, 4, 5, and 6. Her discussion of Étude no. 3 is also excellent but not as in-depth, and although she made sporadic mention of Étude no. 2, it was not discussed in depth.

Chapter 1 introduces the different parts of the Quiñones’ dissertation, provides biographical information on Piazzolla, and includes a historical introduction to the Études with relevant background information and a discussion of the reception of the Études by classical flutists. She mentioned how the Tango-Études are not part of the standard repertoire of tango flutists or tango musicians in Argentina.

In Chapter 2, she deconstructed authenticity in tango music, especially as it relates to the Tango-Études. She identified two parameters upon which assumptions about the authenticity of tango music are often based: national identity and sexuality. According to Quiñones, current tango performance scholarship subscribe to the idea that there is only one ‘authentic’ way of playing tango music even as tangueros argue amongst themselves about what is truly authenticity in tango. Lastly in Chapter 2, Quiñones discussed the concept of gender and sexuality and its implications in tango dance, lyrics, and music. At the heart of this chapter is that cultural authenticity is fluid and flexible and this creates an environment for new models of performing the Études.31

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Chapter 3 discussed the concept of “la mugre” or filth as it applies to tango authenticity. Mugre is a feeling that is interpreted by yeites, or tango effects, and is the rhythmic flow akin to tango swing. She noted that musicians from non-tango traditions often struggle to know when to apply it in the music but noted also that it is the essence of the style.

Chapter 4 discussed in detail the practice of accentuation and the how classically trained musicians as well as Piazzolla have interpreted the accentuation of the music on recordings. She analyzed the accentuation in the recordings using spectrograms. She concluded that despite the aural differences in articulation between a tanguero and classically trained musicians, tangueros have no basis on which to claim a truly authentic or musically correct interpretation of it.32

Chapter 5 focused on the breath mark found in Étude no. 1. She analyzed recordings of classically trained musicians and their interpretation of the breath mark. She discovered that flutists did not breath consistently according to the breath marks found in the music and concluded that there is no one ‘correct’ or ‘authentic way’ of interpreting the breath marks; she emphasized that the role of the breath marks are to inform the phrasing. Furthermore, this chapter explores the relationship between physicality and performance. Towards this aim, Quiñones performed a gestural analysis of Astor Piazzolla of a live performance by his band.

Chapters 6 and 7 are more limited in scope. Chapter 6 treats melodic improvisation as it pertains to Étude no. 4. Quiñones explained that Piazzolla embellished similar melodies and that there is opportunity to also approach Étude no. 4 with that mind set. Chapter 7 focuses on the rhythmic expression found in Étude no. 5 and how performers may add ornamentation to mark time and bring forth the accentuation.

32 Quiñones, 251.
A key outcome of Quiñones’ dissertation is her discovery of the manuscript of the *Tango-Études*. This will shed light on many questions that relate to editorial differences between the original 1987 published score and subsequent adaptations of it for other instruments. Her research will be welcome in scholarly circles worldwide; however, as she mentioned in her thesis, it might be received with some skepticism in Argentina because she is a foreigner.\(^{33}\)

Quiñones’ dissertation is of significant academic interest, its breadth beneficial to musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and studious performers. In contrast, the present dissertation is more oriented toward and useful for performers of all levels who need a guide to or reference manual on the style and performance practice of the *Tango-Études* and tango music in general.

**Relevance of this dissertation**

The contribution of this dissertation to the scholarly discussion of Piazzolla’s *Tango-Études* is relevant and original in several ways. First of all, Chapter 2 discusses the role of the flute in the history of tango music from its beginning. The flute’s decline and resurgence as a solo tango instrument, especially in the music of Astor Piazzolla, are discussed. Furthermore, this Chapter provides a detailed list of the tango music written for the flute and music written for the ensembles of which the flute was a part. Music excerpts from tangos written by flutists supplement this discussion. Finally, the author of this dissertation transcribed solos played by Piazzolla’s flutists; this is important as it shows how flutists who played with the composer interpreted his music.

One of this dissertation’s most significant contributions is a series of interviews with experts in the field of tango performance, including flutist Claudio Barile, bandoneónist Daniel Binelli, and vibraphonist Gary Burton. These interviews are an important research element for

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\(^{33}\) Quiñones, 68.
instrumentalists seeking insight into the tango style. These professionals have played tango music for many years and have either worked for or performed with Piazzolla himself. Of particular interest to prospective performers is the interview with Mr. Binelli, who was quite familiar with the *Tango-Études*. In my interview with him, I had the opportunity to play Études no. 1, 3, and 4, and he provided much helpful feedback. He spoke about the music and sang some passages. In addition, he played excerpts on the piano which he asked me to imitate on the flute. Finally, he penciled in the score how to add ornamentation to a few places in the music.

There were other times when Binelli would dictate the notes of new ornaments and ask me to write them down on staff paper; then, he would double check that I did the transcription correctly. All the information gained from these interviews is interwoven throughout the dissertation, but mostly in Chapters 3 and 4, which deal with style and performance. Full transcriptions for each of these interviews are included in the Appendix.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation thoroughly analyses each Étude and focuses on formal structure, phrasing, tonality, themes, and motives. Chapter 4 goes deeper and it is more descriptive in the analysis of the Tango-Études and its relation to performance than any other work that has been published so far.

As this is a D.M.A. (Doctoral of Musical Arts) dissertation, its main target audience is performers who seek to deepen their knowledge of another musical style through reading scholarly research. Composers and theorists might also benefit from reading this thesis as it deals with much analysis. Thus, a major research element of this dissertation is the symbiotic relationship between musical analysis and performance. There is limited research done on music analysis and performance of the *Tango-Études*. Though two dissertations dealing at length with rhythm, accentuation, and breathing in the *Tango-Études* have been published, they do not
include a complete analysis of phrasing, tonality, and formal structure and how these relate to performance.

Last but not least, this study sheds new light on the compositional process by which Piazzolla composed the Études and other tango music. The Études were written with implied voices or chordal structures similar to solo works for flute or violin by Johann Sebastian Bach. There are many reductions in Chapter 4 that demonstrate this process. Furthermore, unique to this study is its exploration of how each of the implied voices is often constructed as a result of descending chromatic chords; my reductions of this voice leading are found throughout Chapter 4 and are exclusive to this dissertation. This discovery will benefit Piazzolla scholars as it will shed new light on his compositional process, not only in these Études but in most of his works.
CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF THE FLUTE IN TANGO MUSIC

The tango is the dance of the devil. It is the one he prefers. He dances it to cool himself off. His wife, daughters, and servants also cool themselves off.

-Erik Satie

A point of contention among musicologists is how to define the different periods of history in the tango. Overlapping characteristics in style, instrumentation, function, and personnel (bands, band leaders, composers, etc.) make it difficult to pinpoint with certainty where each era starts or end. Because the emphasis of this dissertation is placed on the history of the flute, it will follow the same periodization suggested by Alejandro Martino in his article “Aportes de Astor Piazzolla a la historia de la flauta en el tango.” Martino, a composer, flutist, and authority on the music of Astor Piazzolla, suggests several periods in the history of the flute in tango music: first, “Origins” (ca. 1870-1900), second, “guardia vieja” (ca. 1900-1930), third, “The decline” (ca. 1930-1960), and fourth, “Piazzolla’s music” (ca. 1960-1990).

Early tango (ca. 1870-1900)

Place and purpose

At the end of the nineteenth century, early tango was primarily accompaniment music for dancing. The tango was danced exclusively by the lower classes—thugs, pimps, prostitutes, knife fighters, poor immigrants, and compadritos (ladies-men). Tango historian Luis Adolfo Sierra

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explains: “Originally a dance and nothing more than a dance, elementary in its music and daring in its choreography, tango bore the shameful stigma of its illegitimate birth. It came from the lowest of the social spheres, and wandered through the outskirts attempting to hide its humiliating proscription.”³

The dance was restricted to brothels and academias, described by Collier and Haas as, “shady cafes, bars or dance venues where the ‘waitresses’ could also be hired as dancing partners and in many cases as whores.”⁴ These establishments were located in the poorest communities: the arrabales (slums) and conventillos (tenement houses).⁵ The general population, and especially the upper class, rejected the tango, its dancers, choreography, and environments; in short, they despised everything that tango represented.

Between 1850 and 1900, many young Europeans from Spain, Italy, and France migrated to Argentina with the goal of earning their fortunes before returning home. According to the cliché narrative, most immigrants were male and there was a shortage of women. Men had difficulty finding girlfriends or brides, instead resorting to brothels and academias for entertainment.⁶ In many cases, these establishments were the only place where men could meet,

³ Luis Adolfo Sierra, Historia de la orquesta típica: Evolución instrumental del tango (Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo, 1976), 12. Translation mine, original text reads: “Originariamente danza, nada más que danza, elemental en su música y zafada en su coreografía, arrastraba el tango los estigmas infamantes de una cuna bastarda. Provenía de las esferas sociales de inferior condición, y ambulaba por los suburbios ocultando entre gentes de su rango, una humillante proscripción.”
⁴ Simon Collier and Ken Haas, Tango: The Dance, the Song, the Story (New York, N.Y: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 47.
⁵ The historical narrative of the birth of a musical style in slums and low society is not exclusive to tango music and Argentine society; on the contrary, it is a common narrative that is also found in other musical traditions such as merengue, salsa, hip-hop, and jazz. For more information about the places where jazz developed, see Mervin Cooke, Jazz (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 28, 47 and Catherine Schmidt-Jones, "Ragtime," Connexions, January 4, 2010, http://cnx.org/content/m10878/2.9/.
socialize, and dance with women. Brothel owners would hire musicians to provide the music for dancing.\(^7\)

**Ensembles**

In the first thirty years of tango music, circa 1870-1900, most tango bands were small, consisting of trios and quartets, and the flute was a staple instrument in these formations. Most early tango bands used instruments of European origin; these include the flute, piano, violin, harp, guitar, double bass, and bandoneón.\(^8\) Generally percussion instruments (or instruments of African heritage) were not part of the early tango.\(^9\) The most common formation was a trio made up of flute, violin, and harp.\(^10\) Other instruments played in these early ensembles included the violin, guitar, and harp. In addition to these instruments, the piano, clarinet, accordion, mandolin, and harmonica also made occasional appearances.\(^11\) Because many of these instruments were of Italian origin or were used in Italy and brought to Argentina by immigrants, the process of their acceptance in tango bands is often referred to as the “Italinization” of the tango.\(^12\) Eventually, the guitar would replace the harp making the new instrumentation part of what would become the orquesta típica criolla, or standard tango band.

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\(^7\) Ibid., 17.
\(^9\) There are some exceptions to this performance practice as there were a few tango bands that added percussion instruments to their ensemble; some of these include: Fresedo and Canaro, who added traps to their groups; Villoldo, who played castanets; Salgán, who added a bombo (similar to bass drum) to two of his compositions: “Con bombo legüero” and “Tango del balanceo”, and lastly Piazzolla, who added drums to much of his music from the 1970s onwards.
\(^11\) Alejandro Martino, “Aportes de Astor Piazzolla a la historia de la flauta en el tango,” 91. Martino argues that the word “flute” was colloquially used to denote the harmonica and believes that researchers confuse harmonica and flute players.
\(^12\) Collier and Haas, 50. As previously mentioned, all instruments in the early tango (1870-1900) were of European origin. Italian migrants brought the instruments mentioned above. These instruments, however, never became part of the orquesta típica.
Musicians

Information about musicians from this period beyond basic bibliographic data is scant. Most of these musicians played intuitively with rudimentary musical training; most were self-taught and used only the most basic tonalities without knowledge of music notation. Some of the most recognized flutists of this era were: Ramón Fernández, Juan Berti, el “Crespo” Emilio, Lorenzo Capurro, Juan Carlos Bazán, Domingo Benigno, Juan Firpo, and José María Martínez.

Music

Published works by the original composers are rare since most early tango composers lacked formal training and composed by ear. Likewise, the musicians, most of whom lacked formal training and the ability to read music themselves, learned these works by ear. They ably recognized the chords used for the basis or beginning of improvisations; it is probable that the music was entirely improvised.

In this nascent style, the flute and violin were used as solo instruments. Flutists and violinists would play the melody and improvise variations. According to Sierra, “When the improvisations sounded happy, they were repeated many times, eventually becoming definite tunes which the musicians could recognize by ear.” Example 2.5 shows an excerpt from a fast melody as might have been played by a flutist or violinist.

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14 Carlos Fernández, Las verdades relativas: (La historia nacional y su música popular urbana) (Buenos Aires: Editorial Dunken, 2012), 290. Biographical information for these flutists could not be obtained.
15 Collier and Haas, 47.
16 Sierra, 14. Translation mine, original text reads: “Cuando las improvisaciones eran felices, se repetían una y otra vez hasta quedar convertidas en temas definitivos, que los intérpretes reconocían de ‘oído’.”
EXAMPLE 2.1 Excerpt from El Llorón by Ambrosio Radizzani

![Example 1](image1.png)

The main role of the guitar or harp was to play accompaniment for the two melodic instruments by providing a rhythmic foundation. Simple three-chord harmonic progressions would often be employed (i-iv-V7 or I-IV-V7); the most common rhythmic accompaniment was the habanera. The example below shows the habanera rhythmic accompaniment used by the guitar or harp.

EXAMPLE 2.2 Excerpt from Armenonville by Juan Maglio

![Example 2](image2.png)

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17 Ambrosio Radizzani, “El llorón,” trans. Mark Wyman, (Delf Music, Amsterdam, 2006). Other well-known works by Radizzani where the flute would have been featured include “El escobero” and “Quilmes.”

18 Sierra, 14.

19 Ibid. 13. Christopher Dorsey’s transcription of guitarist Luciano Rios’ recording of 1912; Rios was the guitarist in Juan Maglio’s band, one of the most popular bands of the time.
In general, music and dance from this early tango (1870-1900) were cheerful, playful, and picaresque. According to Sierra, “the pizzicato of the violin, the strumming of the guitar, and embellishments of the flute, created a way to express the tango, which was then playful, naughty and mischievous, as required by its acrobatic choreography.”

La guardia vieja (ca. 1900-1930)

Place and purpose

The period of 1900-1930 is also known as la guardia vieja (old guard). As in the previous thirty years, tango music’s primary purpose was to accompany dancing. In the early stages of la guardia vieja, the music and dance remained restricted to the residents of slums and tenement houses and still faced rejection by the upper class. Despite this apparent exclusion from high society, the attitude towards tango was beginning to change as young adventurous aristocrats intermingled among the prostitutes and people of all social backgrounds in bordellos and during carnival.

In contrast to the negative stigma tango carried in its native country, it enjoyed wide popularity in Western Europe and the United States. Chris Dorsey concurs:

At this same time, however, the tango became accepted internationally (most notably in Paris) and returned to Argentina, civilized through a “re-importation” from Europe. Hence, a sinful dance from the “underworld” of porteño Buenos Aires became a national symbol of Argentina and evolved into a music that decent people could danced to in salons.

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20 Sierra, op. cit.,15. Spanish text reads: “Los tríos memorables de Palermo, con sus ‘pizzicatos’ de violín, ‘bordoneos’ de guitarra y ‘fiorituras’ de la flauta, crearon una manera de expresar el tango, que era por entonces retozón, travieso y picaresco, tal como lo requería su acrobática coreografía.
21 Bozzarelli, 17.
22 Dorsey, 17.
Thus, the music once played in places frequented by persons of questionable reputation began to be played (and danced) in new venues such as cafes and dance halls, where professional musicians were hired to play. Tango was no longer exclusively danced by the low class but was gradually gaining traction among other, more distinguished members of society.23

**Ensembles**

The name *orquesta típica* was adopted during this period to refer to tango orchestras. Concurrently, there were other bands that played other styles of music, including waltzes, polkas, pasodobles, mazurkas, and tarantellas, but the term *orquesta típica* was reserved for those bands that played only tango music. Vicente Greco is believed to be the first to adopt the term.24

The beginning of la guardia vieja was an important time for the flute in tango for three reasons: first, there was much music written for it; second, it was one of the main instruments of the orquesta típica, and third, it coexisted with the bandoneón, the instrument which would later supplant it in tango bands.25 At first, the standard instrumentation of la guardia vieja consisted of flute, violin, bandoneón, and guitar, but by the 1920s, the instrumentation evolved and expanded to include the piano and double bass.

Indeed, the flute enjoyed a place of distinction in the orquesta típica of this time. The instrument could be heard in the most popular bands of the time, such as Vicente Greco’s and Julio Maglio’s. Greco’s trio of 1906 consisted of bandoneón, violin, and flute; this ensemble was later expanded to a sextet of two bandoneóns, two violins, piano, and flute. This sextet was unusually large for tango bands of this period. Maglio’s band, on the other hand, was smaller,

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23 Simon Collier and Ken Haas, 50.
being comprised of a bandoneón, violin, flute, and guitar, but it proved more popular than Greco’s band and enjoyed larger record sales.  

Even though the flute was one of the most widely used instruments in tango bands, that prestigious position would eventually begin to erode by the mid-1910s: “the bandleaders Francisco Canaro and Roberto Firpo made what turned out to be the vital innovation in the instrumental line-up…they substituted a double-bass for the flute, so giving the orquesta típica criolla the distinctive sonority, a depth combined with sharpness, which it was to retain over the next twenty years.”

Throughout this period, the piano and bandoneón were quickly becoming a consistent presence in tango bands. The piano assumed the guitar’s role in trios from the previous era and provided rhythmic accompaniment, often in the classic habanera rhythm. In 1913, pianist Roberto Firpo became one of the first tangueros to use the piano as a leading instrument. The Germanic bandoneón found its way to Argentina in the early twentieth century. Throughout the years it has had several names: bandoleón, bandolión, bandolín, mandoleón, mandolión, bandonión, fuele, fueye, bandola, and jaula. Initially, like the other tango instruments, it was played mainly by ear, but its complex mechanism made it a difficult instrument to master; Piazzolla described it as an “infernal instrument.” The first players “were obliged to impose a slower tempo,” resulting in a “duller” or “darker” character. Over time, the bandoneón came to replace the high notes of the flute, so reminiscent of the female voice, with its own low resonant pitches.

26 Simon Collier and Ken Haas, op. cit, 60.
27 Collier, 62.
30 Collier, 14.
Musicians

Well-known composers and band leaders from this period include Vicente Greco (1888-1924), Francisco Canaro (1888-1964), Augusto Berto (1889-1953), Juan Maglio (1881-1934), Eduardo Arolas (1892-1924), Arturo Bernstein (1882-1935), Genaro Espósito (1886-1944), and Roberto Firpo (1884-1969). Many of their compositions and recordings featured the flute as a solo instrument. Flutists that played during this time include: Mauricio Guariglia (1879-1953), Carlos Hernani Macchi (1878-1929), Ventosa Pita, Luis Teisseire (1883-1960), and Vicente Pecci (1876-1945).

Music

Published compositions from this period are abundant. Of the musicians who played in the previous thirty years, some remained active. Most of these musicians continued to play and compose by ear, and they often hired an arranger to transcribe their compositions. For example, the music for one of the most celebrated tangos, *El choclo* (maize) by Ángel Villoldo was not transcribed by its composer but by pianist, band leader, and composer Jose Luis Roncallo (1875-1954).\(^{31}\) Example 2.3 illustrates Roncallo’s transcriptions.

Other well-known tangos written during this time include the “Cumparsita” and “Cara Sucia,” among others.

During la guardia vieja, changes to form and time signature resulted in a tango which was more rhythmically and stylistically independent from its precursor dances. Lisa Ham, in her dissertation “An Analysis of the Influence of Tangos on Selected Organ Works by Pamela Decker: Flores del Desierto,” explained that until around 1915, tango music was still composed in three parts; for example, the well-known tango “La cumparsita” follows the musical structure (ABC), with all major sections of the work in the same key. Starting in the 1920s, composers began to replace the ternary form with binary form; this newly adopted form had two equal parts, the second part in the dominant or relative minor.\(^\text{32}\)

Around the same time, in 1918, composers began experimenting with different time signatures. In conjunction with the already established 2/4 of the precursor dances and of the early Argentine tango, 4/8 was introduced as an alternative time signature. This small change

\(^{32}\) Ham, 31.
began to separate the tango from the precursor dances since most were written in 2/4. Even though the “habanera” rhythm permeated all Argentine tangos, the 4/8 time signature began to move tango away from that staple rhythm.33

It took the introduction of 4/4 to forever free tango from its metrical dependence on the antecedent dances. This change completely eliminated the habanera rhythm (and its various accentuations), allowing composers to experiment with different beat accentuations (usually resulting on an equal accent on all beats). Bozzarelli claims that these two changes in time signature made the tango slower and sadder.34

Golden age (1930-1960)

Place and purpose

As Buenos Aires grew in land print and population, its music fast became the music of the masses; people gathered by the hundreds, even thousands, to dance the tango.35 During this period, tango took place mostly in the clubes sociales y deportivos, popular social and sports clubs dispersed throughout the city. These establishments defined the commercial setting for the music, for they sponsored dances and hired bands to play them. Among the most important tango venues were Villa Malcolm, Atlanta, El Fulgor, and El Villa Crespo.36

Tango, once associated with the arrabales and conventillos, had become an urban sensation. No longer practiced only by one social group, it had become mainstream, accepted

33 Bozzarelli, 11. The time signatures 2/4 and 2/8 would generally impart differing characteristics and styles in performance. The merits of each time signature are not the focus of this dissertation though most performers would interpret them differently.
34 Ibid., 12.
36 Ibid.
and appreciated by all members of society; it was danced by *bacanes* (rich), the middle class, and *reos* (vulgars). In many ways, tango, the dance and music, defined and represented the character of the city and its inhabitants.

**Ensembles**

Many of the changes in instrumentation that began in previous eras had become standardized by tango’s golden age; the new orquesta típica comprised first and foremost of quintets made up of bandoneón, piano, violin, guitar, and double bass. As larger venues, some holding audiences of hundreds or even thousands, began to book performances, the basic standard instrumentation of the orquesta was doubled or even tripled, forming a veritable tango orchestra à la jazz big band.

Even though this was a dormant time for the flute in the history of tango music, some bands utilized the flute in their ensembles. For example, the band *Quarteto del 900*, active from 1936 to 1937, had Enrique Bour on flute and included such prominent tangueros as bandoneóist Aníbal Troilo, violinist Elvino Vardaro, and pianist and accordion player Feliciano Brunelli.37 Another band that used the flute as part of its instrumentation was the *Orquesta de la Guardia Vieja Poncio-Bazán*, with Vicente Pecci (1876-1945) on flute.38 These bands were still playing in the old or guardia vieja style. One of Pecci’s compositions can be seen in Example 2.4.

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37 Emilio Pichetti, “Feliciano Brunelli,” *Todo tango*, http://www.todotango.com/spanish/creadores/fbrunelli.asp (accessed on September 14, 2011). Troilo and Vardaro were famous bandleaders and major influences in Piazzolla’s development as a composer; for more information see María Susana Azzi and Simon Collier, *Le Grand Tango*, 66. This band only recorded two compositions: *Amalia* by Vardaro and Brunelli and *El pillete* by Graciano de Leone.

38 Martino, op. cit., 92.
EXAMPLE 2.4  *El juramento* by flutist Vicente Pecci

![Sheet music image]

**Musicians**

Some of the most renowned tango bandleaders and bands came into fruition during this era, and their music forms the pillars in the pantheon of tango music. These illustrious musicians include Anibal Troilo (1914-1975), Pedro Maffia (1899-1967), Osvaldo Pugliese (1905-1995), Horacio Salgán (1916-2016), and Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992). Flutists who performed during this period include Enrique Bour (1904-1984), José Milano (1901-1988), Juvencio Física (1909-1987), and Domingo Rulio (1927-1995).

**Music**

Although the music composed during this era excludes the flute, flutists active in previous eras still composed tangos that were performed by standard tango bands. Some of these compositions include *El juramento*, *Andate lejos*, and *Elvira* by Vicente Pecci and *Entrada prohibida*, *De mil amores*, and *Cinco a dos* by Luis Teisseire. Example 2.5 shows one of Teisseire’s tangos.
EXAMPLE 2.5 *De mil amores* by flutist Luis Teisseire

![Musical notation](image)

**Tango nuevo (1960-1990)**

**Place and purpose**

By the mid-1950s the sound of tango was starting to change. Musically, it was becoming more complex; form, rhythm, and harmony were some of the elements that were altered most. Four composers were the main force behind this change. They include: Horacio Salgán (1916-2016), Osvaldo Pugliese (1905-1995), Eduardo Rovira (1925-1980), and Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992). Some of their compositions include: *Don Agustín Bardi* and *A fuego lento*, by Salgán; *Recuerdo* and *Yumba* by Pugliese; *Serial dodecafónico*, and *Sónico* by Rovira; *Lo que vendrá* and *Marrón y azúl* by Piazzolla.

Beginning in 1955 with the *Octeto Buenos Aires*, Piazzolla set into motion a process that would forever alter tango: his consistent and deliberate infusion of tango with foreign elements. Piazzolla’s exposure to classical and jazz music while studying and living abroad in the United

![Musical notation](image)
States and France influenced him to form new ensembles, changing the aesthetics of the listening experience of tango. He explains:

In 1954, being in Paris, I had the chance to listen to many modern jazz ensembles, among them Gerry Mulligan's Octet. It was really wonderful to see their enthusiasm while they played: each one's individual pleasure in the improvisation, or the excitement of the whole group while playing a chord. In short, [it was] something that I had never seen before around tango or tango musicians.³⁹

These elements clashed with the already established aesthetics, style, and function of tango. In his book Piazzolla, la música límite, Carlos Kuri explains the changes that tango nuevo (new tango) brought:

[Piazzolla] eliminates the privileged place of the singer (firmly established by the tango of the 40s); his instrumental writing deepens to a chamber music level; with the addition of the electric guitar, he breaks and abandons the model of the tango band. He disregards and brutally expels the dancer, and this in return has a double effect: the elimination of body parts to show off negates the need for a dance floor, and the small nuances in each performance reward a refined ear—this defines the aural nature of his music. Along with this, in a declaration of his break with tradition, he rejects the show aspect that comes with tango.⁴⁰

Unlike the tango of previous eras, new tango did not take place in academias, brothels, dance halls, or social clubs; instead, its composers battled to bring this new form of tango into jazz clubs and concert halls, where listening to music was primary rather than secondary, and where the audiences waited with bated breath and discerning ears.

The function and space occupied by tango became a point of contention between Piazzolla and the traditionalists, and Piazzolla had to fight for his tango nuevo until late in his

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⁴⁰ Kuri, 180. Translation mine; original text reads: “Elimina el lugar privilegiado del cantor (impuesto por el tango del 40); ahonda de ese modo el trabajo instrumental en una dimensión camarística (con la incisión de la guitarra eléctrica), abandona definitivamente el modelo de la orquesta típica. Olvida y expulsa brutalmente al bailarín, cosa que arrastra un doble efecto: define el carácter auditivo de su tango (el cuerpo que se requiere ya no es el que se descarga en las pistas de baile, sino el que se carga con la tensión y la minuciosidad de los instrumentos). Junto a esto, como una proclama, renuncia a la dimensión de espectáculo que viene con el tango.”
career. Just as the early tango gained acceptance abroad before becoming accepted by Argentine aristocracy, Piazzolla’s concert music similarly first saw acceptance in Europe, Japan, and the United States before finally becoming accepted by most Argentines.  

**Ensembles**

Piazzolla composed for diverse ensembles, from solo musicians to large symphonies. He did not limit his writing to the standard tango band; on the contrary, he expanded the standard tango band’s sonorities by introducing new instruments such as the electric guitar, synthesizer, saxophone, vibraphone, percussion, cello, and finally flute. Although Piazzolla often returned to a standard tango band of five or six players, many believe—including Piazzolla himself—that this was necessitated by practical and financial concerns. Stated simply, Piazzolla wrote new tango music; the diverse ensembles were his medium of expression. Towards the end of his life, Piazzolla became a soloist, championing his works with orchestras around the world.

Furthermore, Piazzolla’s bands differed from the bands of other bandleaders in style, technique, and execution. He would often recruit instrumentalists that had a different or an additional musical background other than tango, mainly jazz or classical. These musicians included flutists, guitarists, string players, and percussionists. Also because of his formal training, his instrumental writing became more like chamber music, especially when he composed in a fugal manner.

Astor Piazzolla’s career as a bandleader and composer of new tango music spanned nearly four decades. Between 1955 and the end of his career in 1990, he led roughly twenty-eight ensembles. These groups assembled in at least four countries, including Argentina, France, Italy,

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41 Gorin, 164.
and the United States. For this dissertation, I will focus on the composer’s bands that included the flute as part of their instrumentation.

Many consider the Octeto Buenos Aires (1955-57) the most revolutionary band in the history of the tango because it violently broke with tradition. Piazzolla recounts why he created the ensemble: “. . . The only purpose of the Octeto Buenos Aires is to renew the popular tango, to keep its essence, introduce new rhythms, new harmonies, melodies, timbres and forms.”42 This octet was formed by musicians of the highest caliber, including violinists Enrique Mario Francini (1916-1978) and Hugo Baralis (1914-2002), pianist Atilio Stampone (1926-), bandoneónist Leopoldo Federico (1927-2014), guitarist Horacio Malvicino (1929-), cellist José Bragato (1915-2017), and bassist Juan Vasallo (1927-1995). Standard repertoire that the octet recorded comprised of Rosendo Mendizábal’s El entrerriano; Julio De Caro’s Boedo; Juan Carlos Cobién’s Mi refugio; Pedro Maffía’s Taconeando; Pedro Laurenz’s La revancha; and Enrique Francini’s Tema otoñal. This group recorded two of Piazzolla’s own works: Lo que vendrá and Marrón y azúl.

Piazzolla’s experimentation with instrumentation and harmony and his injection of compositional techniques borrowed from other musical traditions such as jazz and rock made many question what type of music he was composing. Even members of Octeto Buenos Aires thought that Piazzolla’s experiments were excessive and worried that listeners might feel estranged by the new music. No longer sure if what they were playing was even tango, they invited the celebrated bandleader Osvaldo Pugliese to listen to a rehearsal to give his opinion on what style and genre that they were playing. When Pugliese asserted that they were indeed

42 Martin Kutnowski, op. cit., 106.
playing tango, they all felt relieved. Even though the flute was not part of the instrumentation of the Octeto Buenos Aires, this ensemble’s experiments in timbre, sonority, instrumental writing, and ensemble playing influenced later ensembles that featured the flute, including the Octeto Contemporáneo (Contemporary Octet) and Conjunto Electrónico (Electronic Ensemble).

Following on the heels of the Octeto Buenos Aires, Piazzolla formed El Nuevo Octeto (new octet), or Octeto Contemporáneo, in 1963. Its members included violinist Antonio Agri (1932-1998), pianist Jaime Gosis (1913-1975), guitarist Oscar López Ruiz (1938-), bassist Enrique ‘Kicho’ Díaz (1918-1992), flutist Jorge Barone (1930-2004), cellist José Bragato (1915-2017), percussionist Leo Jacobson (n.d.), and Astor Piazzolla on bandoneón. According to Martino, the octet also sometimes provided accompanied for the singer Héctor de Rosas. Works that this group performed and recorded include Lo que vendrá, Divagación, Introducción a heroes y Tumbas (recited by Ernesto Sabato), Noposepe, Ciudad triste, Sideral, Requiem para un malandra (recited by Alfredo Alcón), and Recuerdo de Bohemia.

Between 1973 and 1978, Piazzolla made a series of recordings in Italy, the most famous being Libertango, a work that is widely known in Europe. During this time, he also formed several groups in Argentina, Italy, and France in which the flute played a part. One of these groups was the Conjunto Electrónico (1976), an octet made up of Astor Piazzolla (bandoneón), Juan Carlos Cirigliano (electric and acoustic piano), Santiago Giacobe (organ), Horacio Malvicino (electric guitar) Alberto Cevasco (electric bass), Enrique Roitzner (drums), Daniel Piazzolla (synthesizer), and Luis “Chachi” Ferreira (flute and saxophone). Some of the works that this ensemble recorded and performed include: Libertango, Amelitango, La evasión, Buenos Aires. 

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43 Gorin, 186.
44 Martino, 93.
Aires Hora Cero, Los pajaros perdidos, Bandoneón, Zita, Adiós Nonino, Balada para mi muerte, and Balada para un loco. Singer Jose Trelles would also join the octet. The musical style and instrumentation of this octet is heavily influenced by rock music; for instance, if the bandoneón is excluded from the ensemble, the make-up of the band is identical to that of British rock band Jethro Tull, especially the aggrupation used by Jethro Tull in “Velvet Green.” Although the instrumentation and style of this band approached that of rock bands, Piazzolla did not believe it to be a rock band. He stated: “That was my music; it had more to do with tango than with rock.”

**Musicians**

Even though Piazzolla played with many musicians over his lifetime—many of them already listed—this dissertation will be restricted to the flutists who played with him: Jorge Alberto Barone (1930-2004), Arturo Eric Schneider, “El aleman” (1929-?), and Luis Alberto “Chachi” Ferreira (1938-). These flutists had a jazz background and according to Martino also played the saxophone.

**Music**

After a roughly three-decades-long absence from tango bands, the 1960s was a sort of renaissance for the flute in the history of tango music. At this time, Astor Piazzolla began to utilize the flute as a solo instrument, returning the flute to a place of prominence, putting in it on par with—and occasionally replacing, as in the Conjunto Electrónico—the iconic solo instrument, the violin. His writing for the flute is virtuosic and features heavily in his orchestral works, film music, operatic work, chamber music, and in music for the Octeto Contemporáneo.

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46 Martino, op. cit., 93.
In the following excerpt taken from the introductory cadenza for flute in *Sideral*, the flute is highlighted through virtuosic technique and the flutist is given ample opportunities to flaunt his or her technical and musical skill:

EXAMPLE 2.5 *Sideral* arranged by Astor Piazzolla

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CHAPTER THREE

A PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO TANGO MUSIC

I learned the tricks of the tangueros, those intuitive tricks that helped me later on. I couldn’t define them technically, they are forms of playing, forms of feeling; it’s something that comes from inside, spontaneously.

-Astor Piazzolla

This chapter discusses tango music from the standpoint of the concert musician. Details of tango performance practices such as ornamentation, articulation, improvisation, and rubato; differences between how these practices are applied to the performance of traditional tango and new tango, and elements of style and performance of Piazzolla’s music are the focus of this section. Especially valuable resources in this pursuit are interviews the author held with performers who worked with the composer, including Daniel Binelli (bandoneón), Gary Burton (vibraphone), and Claudio Barile (flute). Some of the topics discussed during these interviews feature: how classically trained musician might learn the style and its performance; what the main stylistic differences are between traditional and new tango; what unique characteristics distinguish Piazzolla’s music and how players can bring them out; and how a musician who did not grow up listening to and playing tango can learn to add rubato, ornamentation, and improvisation when playing the Tango-Études.

Piazzolla’s style is deeply rooted in traditional tango. He mastered all the compositional elements used by other tango composers, including harmony, melodic treatment, phrasing, rhythm, accentuation, and articulation, and into this mixture of techniques he incorporated the teachings of his mentors, Alberto Ginastera and Nadia Boulanger. The modern compositional

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devices Piazzolla learned while studying under these teachers, including ambiguous tonalities, pedal tones, frequent meter changes, polyphonic structures, extreme chromaticism, and alteration of form found a place alongside influences from other styles such as jazz and rock music in his tango music. Tango, however, remained the essential element in his voice as a composer; the compositional elements of traditional tango and the modern compositional techniques were fused together into a new style called *tango nuevo*, or new tango.2

**Form**

The most widely used forms in traditional tangos are two-part (A-B) and three-part (A-B-A) forms.3 In the ternary forms, the A sections are fast and energetic while the middle section may be slower and darker in character.

Frequently, both forms—binary and ternary—are supplemented by introductions, bridges, improvisations, cadenzas, and codas. Tango thesis such as Aníbal Troilo (1914-1975) and Osvaldo Pugliese (1905-1995) employed these expanded forms in compositions such as *María* (1945) and *La Yumba* (1943) respectively. Example 3.1 shows one of several introductions Piazzolla wrote for his famous *Adios Nonino*.

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3 Lisa Ham, 57. The ternary form mentioned above mainly applies to works that were composed after the guardia vieja; works composed during the guardia vieja mostly used a binary form. Furthermore, there are a few tangos that use other forms; Juan Carlos Cobián, for example, uses a rondo form (A-B-A-B-A) in his composition “La casita de mis viejos”. For more information, see Claudio Púa Reyes and Paloma Martín Vidal, *La armonía en el tango. Un estudio desde el análisis armónico* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2010), 44.
EXAMPLE 3.1  *Adios Nonino*, introductory piano cadenza by Astor Piazzolla, mm. 1-8

Traditional tangos usually modulate to a closely related key, with a harmonic digression that follows the expected design of the form; in a ternary form, for example, the digression occurs in the middle section, with the tonality of the work returning to the home key at the reoccurrence of A. In Example 3.2, a pivot chord is used to change to the new tonality in a display of the conventional modulation employed by tango composers.

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4 Transcribed by Mark Arthur Wyman. One of Piazzolla’s most celebrated works, “Adíós nonino” (Good-bye, grandfather; this title combines Spanish and Italian words. Nonino was a term of endearment Piazzolla used when referring to his father), was written as a eulogy to his father. Piazzolla’s ensembles often introduced it with a piano cadenza in performances. According to Allan Atlas, Piazzolla wrote two different versions of the piano introduction, one for pianist Dante Amicarelli and the other for Pablo Ziegler for more information see Atlas, Allan W. “Astor Piazzolla: tangos, funerals, and “blue notes”.” In Essays on music and culture in honor of Herbert Kellman, ed., Herbert Kellman and Barbara Helen Haggh (Paris: Minerve, 2001), 539. Argentine pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim performed the above introductory cadenza in a public concert with the Orquesta Filarmónica de Buenos Aires on December 31, 2006. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKSQF4mjsOM (accessed on 28 December 2011).

5 Some new tango compositions such as the first *Tango-Étude* do not adhere to the design of the form. Often, they either do not modulate at the expected place or they go to a distant tonality.
EXAMPLE 3.2 *Tinta verde* (Green ink) by Agustín Vardi (1884-1941), mm. 22-28

Astor Piazzolla’s compositions employ both binary and ternary forms. Horacio Ferrer, Piazzolla’s intimate friend and lyricist for many of his songs, classified Piazzolla’s compositions as either small or large. Small works are single-movement instrumental and vocal works that use either form. The large works are multi-movement tango compositions in which each movement has its own form not limited to binary or ternary but inclusive of diverse forms from sonata form, preludes, and fugues. Some examples of large works include *Le grand tango* (1982) for cello and piano, *Trois préludes pour piano* (1987), and *Tango suite* (1985) for two guitars. In both his large and small works, sections are often delineated by contrasting tempi, tonalities, and textures. In keeping with tradition, the individual movements of the large works often have introductions, bridges, and codas.

Piazzolla's larger orchestral works such as *Concierto de bandoneón y guitarra* (1985) (Concerto for bandoneón and guitar) and his opera *Maria de Buenos Aires* (1968) are not mere

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6 Claudio Púa Reyes and Paloma Martín Vidal, 65.
8 Ham, op. cit., 44.
tango-flavored concert-hall compositions but full-fledged tango compositions with symphonic instrumentation. Ham explains: “instead of incorporating tango into the symphonic forms, he now puts his imagination and technical capacity to the service of adapting orchestral sonorities to a more traditional tango format.”

The *Tango-Études* appear to employ ternary forms. However, these works do not strictly follow standard ternary form; rather, they often contain parts of asymmetrical length and unusual tonal-relations, blurring the boundaries of ternary form. Every aspect of the formal structure of each Étude will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

**Rhythm**

Alberto Speratti quoted Piazzolla as stating: “above all, what is rhythmical, percussive, and accentuated is what I think is most important when performing tango; these things give tango its swing.” Undoubtedly, Piazzolla exploited these musical parameters through his constant use of rhythmic motives drawn from his classical training. One of the rhythmic figures most frequently heard in his music is the <3, 3, 2> pattern, which through its ubiquity came to signify his music.

It should be noted that Piazzolla was not the originator for this rhythmic figure. It was commonly used in traditional tangos, especially those of Julio de Caro (1899-1980) and Alfredo Gobbi (1912-1965). In fact, Piazzolla credits these composers and their use of this rhythm in their compositions with being major influences on his own music. To pay tribute, he even

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9 Ham, 44.
10 In Étude no. 6, for example, Piazzolla blurs the lines of form, with the result being perceived as either a binary or ternary form.
dedicated a work to each composer: *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi* (1970) for Gobbi and *Decarisimo* (1961) for de Caro. The following example from *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi* demonstrates the \( <3, 3, 2 > \) pattern in the left hand of the piano.

EXAMPLE 3.3 *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*, mm. 34-38

Ramón Pelinski, an authority on tango music, suggests that the roots of this rhythmic pattern predate the traditional tango. He traces these rhythms to those found in the precursor tango dances of the late nineteenth century: the habanera, milonga, and tango-andaluz.\(^{13}\) Recordings made in the early twentieth century show disagreement in the execution of these precursor rhythms. Often guitarists accentuated the fourth and seventh eighth-notes; in addition, they also sometimes tied or slurred the fourth and fifth eighth-notes. These differences in execution led to the transformation of these rhythms into the syncopated rhythm of \( <3, 3, 2 > \).\(^{14}\) The following example shows the transformation of \( <3, 3, 2 > \) syncopated rhythm found in the precursor dances.

\(^{13}\) Ramón Pelinski, “Astor Piazzolla: entre tango y fuga, en busca de una identidad estilística.” In *Estudios sobre la obra de Astor Piazzolla*. Ed. Omar García Brunelli (Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical Ediciones, 2008) 42. It is important to point out that the precursor dances were all in duple meters and not quadruple meter as Pelinski described. For more information see Oscar Bozarelli, *Ochenta años de tango platense* (La Plata: Editorial Osboz, 1972), 11.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 42.
EXAMPLE 3.4 Habanera (A), milonga (B), tango andaluz (C), and tango (D and E)

Piazzolla’s contribution to this established tango rhythm lies in his expansion and variation of the <3, 3, 2> figure to two figures, each two measures long: <3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2> and <3, 2, 3 + 3, 3, 2>. In the Tango-Études, these expanded versions of the rhythm occur in the first and fifth, respectively. Other works in which the composer uses these rhythms include Baires Promenade (1978) and La Evasión (1975). These variations gave Piazzolla more options and variety for syncopation, especially in a quadruple time signature such as 4/8 or 4/4.

Breathing

For wind players, the proper application of breath is essential to a stylized tango performance of the Tango-Études. In some parts of the music, countless breath marks populate the score whereas in other parts of the music they are conspicuously absent. How a performer can make sense of this overabundance of breath marks in each of the Tango-Études will be discussed from a musical as well as a technical perspective.

Generally, there are two types of breath marks in the music: the first is a small comma and the second breath mark resembles a check mark or the letter V.

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16 Ibid., 242.

In Étude no. 1, for example, small commas are interspersed throughout both A sections, where they appear only after long notes, usually dotted-eighth notes. No breath marks are present where the melody is made up of short notes such as quarter and eighth-notes.

Such frequent breaths in the music are not needed by most wind players. In fact, at the marked tempi, most performers can easily play two measures or more without taking a breath. Why did the composer—or editor—write breath marks in the music and how should players interpret them? One solution is to take all the breath marks where they are marked, but this approach creates technical problems for some players. In his book *The Art of Wind Playing*, Arthur Weisberg contends that “there is discomfort connected with having too much air, and second, there is the problem of having to expel the extra air before being able to take another breath.”17 Another viable way of interpreting the breath marks is as *luftpausen* or pause. According to Gardner Read, “The comma indicates a very brief pause, equivalent to taking a short breath. This sign is preferable to a very small rest, for it ensures that the note it follows will not be cut too short, but will receive full value.”18

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18 Gardner Read, *Music Notation: A Manual of Modern Practice* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 2nd edition, 1979), 105. When applied in the *Tango-Études*, the author of this dissertation believes that the pause Gardner is referring to has to do with sound and not time, otherwise the drive and continuity of the musical line would be affected in such as fast tempo.
Claudio Barile, principal flutist of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Buenos Aires and a specialist in the music of Piazzolla, concurs that each comma or breath mark should be played as a small pause in the airstream between the note which precedes it and the note which follows it. The general effect of the breath marks on a phrase should be one of energy without losing drive or interrupting the continuity of the musical line.\textsuperscript{19}

The second type of breath mark found in the Tango-Études, which looks like a check mark—or the letter V in some editions—is present only at the beginning of each major section.\textsuperscript{20} These larger bigger breath marks differ in appearance between the original solo edition (1987) and the flute and piano edition (2006). In the original version, the breath marks look like check marks and in the 2006 edition the breath marks look like the letter V. This difference should not affect how these breath marks are interpreted since they are placed in the same location. The following example shows the bigger breath mark.

EXAMPLE 3.6 Étude no. 1, check mark in the music, mm. 34-35

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{example36}
\end{figure}

Piazzolla most likely notated these marks to indicate to performers the beginning of each major section. These marks can be interpreted as key arrival points where the performer can take

\textsuperscript{19} Claudio Barile, interviewed by Asis Reyes, West Palm Beach, Florida, February 2, 2012.
\textsuperscript{20} Attempts to locate this specific marking in music notation or compositional books have ended in failure; however, this sign was located in a book written by a flute professor, and he used it to indicate a breath mark. The author of this dissertation believes that it is a breath mark indication. For more information see Michel Debost, \textit{The Simple Flute: From A to Z} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 49.
a longer breath, almost a delay, to emphasize the next entrance. In general, both breath marks should be used as interpretative aids to make the music more dramatic. As in the note to performers found at the beginning of the *Tango-Études* explains, “It is advisable that the performer should well exaggerate the accents and respirations, therefore inspiring the way of which tangos are played on the bandoneón.”

Some scholars, such as Carlos Kuri, question the ability of the flute, or perhaps of the flute player, to imitate the style of how tangos are played on the bandoneón; Kuri quips, “A flute, a lung that breathes like a bandoneón?” But Piazzolla thought differently. Piazzolla instructs the flutist to imitate general wind techniques of the bandoneón such as breathing and accents; other bandoneón practices, such as attacks and releases, dynamics, and articulation can also be easily imitated on the flute.

**Ornamentation**

Ornamentation has been widely practiced since tango’s inception. As previously discussed, in the early tango trios—usually made up of flute, violin, and guitar—the performers would play the melody and ornament it with scales, trills, arpeggios, etc. Ornamentation was also practiced in the traditional and new tango bands.

Generally, tangueros ornament several parameters in the music, primarily melody, harmony, and rhythm. However, because the flute is not a chordal instrument, this dissertation

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22 Carlos Kuri, *Piazzolla, la música límite* (Argentina: Corregidor, 1997), 165. Translation mine. Kuri said: “¿Una flauta traversa, un pulmón que respire como un fueye?” Although their timbres differ, both the flute and bandoneón are wind instruments and need air in order to produce sound. Many consider the bandoneón the quintessential tango instrument and the sources of a tango band’s distinctive color. To compare the sound quality of the flute and that of the bandoneón would be considered anathema in many traditional tango circles, even if Astor Piazzolla made such a comparison.
focuses on techniques of melodic ornamentation, including registration, bordoneos, *arrastres* (dragging), *fraseo* (phrasing), and variation.

**Registration**

Most tango bandleaders were composers as well as performers. Salgán, Pugliese, Troilo, and Piazzolla all improvised in their own works and also encouraged their musicians to embellish the music. Even when writing the complex music of new tango, Piazzolla made allowances for ornamentation: “I always composed thinking of the musicians who were at my side; I also gave them freedom to fly.”\(^{23}\) The freedom Piazzolla afforded his musicians is evident in a concert played by the *Octeto Electrónico* in Switzerland in 1977.\(^{24}\) In the concert, flutist Luis Ferreira’s performance of several phrases is in stark contrast to the score, sometimes even displacing notes by octaves multiple times within a single phrase.

**EXAMPLE 3.7 (A) written score and (B) transcribed performance by Ferreira**

An additional example in the same piece, where registration is used as an ornamentation tool is the second time the flutist plays the main theme. The first time, the theme is played by the

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\(^{23}\) Natalio Gorin. Translation mine. Original reads: “Siempre escribí pensando en cada uno de los músicos que estaban a mi lado. Pero también les di libertad para que volaran” 44.

flute and bandoneón in unison; the second time, Ferreira plays it an octave higher while Piazzolla simply repeats the same melody as before.

EXAMPLE 3.8  *Zita*, transcribed performances by (A) Piazzolla and (B) Ferreira

Ferreira further ornamented the melody through the use of extended techniques, including flutter tonguing, double tonguing, breath attacks, and distortion of sound in the introduction of the movement.

**Bordoneos**

*Bordoneos*, a guitar technique originally developed to emphasize the bass of a chord in the precursor tango dances such as habanera and candombe, are executed as embellishments before the beat that leads the bass line to a downbeat. The use of bordoneos and their association with the guitar were widely accepted in tango music; even lyricists used the connection in their tango lyrics:

*Guitars are playing*

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25 Performances by Piazzolla and Ferreira; transcription my own.
*the bordoneo*

*Where are the couples?*

*I don’t see them.*

Bordoneos was not the exclusive domain of the guitar, for other instruments of the orquesta típica, such as the piano and bandoneón, eventually imitated this technique. Orlando Goñi (1914-1945), a renowned tango composer and a major exponent of bordoneos, adapted the technique to the piano in standard tango bands, which had a tremendous influence on Piazzolla’s frequent inclusion of bordoneos in his own compositions.

For the classically trained musician, the best way to understand the execution of bordoneos is to think of them as a succession of ornamental notes that happen before the beat. There is no set number of notes in a bordoneos. The notes can move in stepwise motion or in larger intervals and in an ascending or descending contour. In addition, bordoneos can be written as grace notes or rhythmically notated, but the most important aspect of a bordoneos to keep in mind when performing one is that it should emphasize the downbeat by driving the musical line to it.

**EXAMPLE 3.9 Three Preludes: “Flora’s Game”, mm. 62-64**

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27 Enrique Maciel and Héctor Pedro Blomberg, “El triunfo de rosas.” Translation mine. Original text reads: “Ya empiezan las guitarras el bordoneo ¿Dónde están las parejas que no las veo?”
28 Gabriela Mauriño, 246.
29 Ham, 58.
30 Tsai, 39.
Composers do not always notate bordoneos in the music, but professional tango players often include them in their arrangements and performances. In the article “Interpreting the tango music of Astor Piazzolla,” Gabriela Mauriño gives two examples of how to add bordoneos to a piece of music.  

Whether written by the composer or added as extra ornaments during a performance, bordoneos should emphasize the downbeat and should sound improvisatory.

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Arrastres

According to Gabriela Mauriño, *Arrastres*—“dragging” or “slide”—is a common tango effect that anticipates the downbeat by an eighth or sixteenth note.\(^{32}\) Tangueros use this technique to anticipate accents in a quadruple meter and to highlight certain passages by elongating certain notes.\(^{33}\) In the following example, Mauriño explains how musicians can interpret this technique.

**EXAMPLE 3.11** (A) written arrastre, (B) interpretation of the arrastre

In their book *Tracing Tangueros: Argentine Tango Instrumental Music*, Link and Wendland agree with Mauriño’s description and describe this technique in further detail:

“Dynamically, tangueros typically begin arrastre strongly, then reduce the sound level, and ultimately crescendo into beat 1. Thus, there is force, then tension holding the sound back, and finally a release into beat 1.”\(^ {34}\)

Salgán considers arrastres to function as a rhythmic device: “The slide may almost be considered a percussion effect, given that it does not require tonal clarity, but rather, on the

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 58.


\(^{34}\) Kacey Link and Kristin Wendland, *Tracing Tangueros: Argentine Tango Instrumental Music* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 119.
contrary, is a rhythmical effect of an imprecise sound.” According to Fain, “[The arrastre] is generally executed as a combination of glissandi, chords, clusters or ascending chromatics with a slight crescendo.” Salgán proposes an additional way of interpreting the arrastres in which the performer can choose unspecified or indeterminate pitches which “slide” to the downbeat.

EXAMPLE 3.12 (A) written arrastre, (B) interpretation of the arrastre

Even though arrastres may sound similar to a traditional anticipation, it functions differently in its employment as a rhythmic device in conjunction with other musical ornaments rather than as a harmonic device.

Link and Wendland describe three different ways composers notate this technique in their compositions: “The first, and probably most common, simply uses a glissando line to connect an upbeat to a downbeat; the second notates appoggiaturas; and the third notates a sixteenth-note chromatic upbeat leading to a downbeat in a síncope pattern.” The following examples from this text shows how arrastres are notated in a bass line.

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36 Fain, 75.
37 Horacio Salgán, 88.
EXAMPLE 3.1 Three ways in which composers notate arrastres

Link and Wendland also point out that Piazzolla often uses chromatic sixteenth-notes arrastres in his music: “[he] may use two, four, or even a quintuplet of sixteenth notes.” In the *Tango-Études*, there are countless instances of chromatic arrastres. Alejandro Drago refers to these written out arrastres as *chromatico*, or chromatic. Example 3.14 shows a chromatic arrastre.

EXAMPLE 3.14 Étude no. 6, arrastre, mm. 63-64

**Variation**

Variation as a form of melodic embellishment has long been used in Western art-music as well as many types of popular music such as jazz. This type of ornamentation has been present in tango music since its inception and is still in use today. Javier Alem writes that, in the case of tango, “the process of creating a variation involves the substitution of four sixteenth-notes, which can be either upper or lower neighbor tones or passing tones of main notes of the melody, for

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39 Ibid., 30.
every quarter-note. In addition, variation may contain irregular rhythms and other embellishments such as trills, mordents, and tremolos.”

According to Horacio Salgán, variation usually occurs towards the end of the piece but may be used in any part of the music. Although any instrument of a standard tango band can play the variation, it is usually provided by the bandoneónist. Even in an extended ensemble with doubled or tripled instrumentation, variation is usually supplied by the bandoneón section. Many tango variations are extremely technical passages designed to show off the performers’ virtuosity, with the rest of the band simply providing rhythmic accompaniment.

The composer of the work can write a variation, or an arranger can provide it. In many cases, the variation was as important as the tango itself. Some examples of this include the variation for *Recuerdo* by Osvaldo Pugliese and the variation for *Responso* by Aníbal Troilo. Example 3.15 contains an excerpt from Troilo’s *Responso* variation.

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42 Horacio Salgán, 40.
43 Ibid.
In some cases, the variation becomes as popular as the composition itself: Luis Moresco’s (1890-1971) variation for the most famed of tangos, *La cumparsita* (1917), and Feliciano Brunelli’s (1903-1981) variation for his arrangement of Juan de Dios Filiberto’s (1885-1964) *Quejas de bandoneón* (1918), performed by renowned bandleader Aníbal Troilo (1914-1975), provide well-known examples of this phenomenon.

**Fraseo**

In academic circles, “phrase” refers to the basic unit of music that is part of a larger formal structure. A more technical definition of a phrase is “the shortest passage of music which, having reached a point of relative repose, has expressed a more or less complete musical

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thought.” In tango music, however, phrasing, called fraseo, refers to the act of beautifying the written melodic line by modifying its rhythm and adding rubato.

In his article “La cuestión del fraseo en el tango,” Omar García Brunelli makes an inseparable connection between phrasing and rubato. Furthermore, he makes a clear distinction between vocal and instrumental phrasing and rubato. In vocal phrasing, singers manipulate the rhythm of a melody based on the natural flow of the lyrics over a steady accompaniment. Instrumental phrasing and rubato, on the other hand, need to be written out for players in band settings to execute the passages accurately. Horacio Salgán further describes instrumental phrasing and rubato as having two meanings:

The first distinction refers to the themes’s exposition, or more precisely “statement”, which makes use of rubato, appoggiatura, and any other subtlety which contributes to the expression of the phrase…Another example of the term “phrasing.” In the language of the tango makes an allusion to a variant in which the phrase is exposed intermittently, somewhat modifying the notes of the melody and its imagination, but always being recognized.

In her tango flute manual, Fain advances two types of phrasing: fraseo básico or basic phrasing and fraseo extendido or extended phrasing. Basic phrasing “modifies the written rhythm but respects the 1st and 3rd beat of the bar as points of arrival. In other words we can phrase freely within the context of the 1st and 2nd or 3rd and 4th beats of the bar.” The following example shows how a passage is played with basic fraseo.

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46 Omar García Brunelli, “La cuestión del fraseo en el tango”, 163.
47 Ibid., 164.
48 Ibid., 165.
49 Salgán, 41.
50 Fain, 18.
EXAMPLE 3.16  *Naranjo en flor* (1944) by Virgilio Expósito, mm. 17-20, (A) written score and (B) performance with phraseo⁵¹

![Example 3.16 Naranjo en flor](image)

In extended phrasing, on the other hand, “the melody no longer respects arrivals at the 1ˢᵗ and 3ʳᵈ beats of the bar...we do not have in mind rhythm patterns, but the idea that the focus of the work is the phrase. The duration of the sound is reliant on the interpretation.”⁵² Example 3.17 shows how a passage is played with extended fraseo.

EXAMPLE 3.17  *Malena* (1941) by Lucio Demare, (A) original and (B) transcription of performance by Roberto Goyeneche⁵³

![Example 3.17 Malena](image)


⁵² Fain, 27.

Rubato

Rubato is an essential part of a tango performance and is used in much the same way as in classical music; by fluidly altering tempo, both tango and classical musicians attempt to make a note, melody, or phrase more expressive. However, unlike classical music which often contains many expression marks in the score, tango in many ways resembles the scores and performance practices of jazz, where expressive indications are seldom notated but are always executed in a performance nonetheless. According to Brunelli, “The rubato effect can be written; however, it can be difficult and cumbersome to notate and is sometimes unnecessary.”

Since its inception, tango music has been played or sung with much rubato, and this is one of the most important aspects of its performance. At first, untrained singers would alter rhythms to better communicate the emotional and dramatic content of the lyrics; therefore, the rhythm found in the score sometimes differs from that found in actual performances. The following example demonstrates how the music is notated and how it is executed.

EXAMPLE 3.18 Excerpt from *Siga el corso* by (A) García Jiménez and (B) A. Aieta

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54 Omar García Brunelli, “La cuestión del fraseo en el tango”, 163. Translation mine.
Modern tango bands continue this tradition of using rubato to achieve highly expressive performances. Whether a violinist is stretching or shortening individual notes in a solo or a band is slowing down or speeding up collectively, rubato remains common practice among tangueros.\(^5^6\)

Most tango composers do not write expression marks in the score that would indicate the tempo or character of the work, either at the beginning or in the rest of the composition. This is the case in such renowned works as *A fuego lento* (1953) and *Don Agustín Bardi* (1947) by Horacio Salgán. In recordings Salgán made with various ensembles, the bands often manipulated the tempo from fast to slow and then back to a faster speed in order to achieve a more expressive rendition of the compositions. In addition, other musical parameters that were not notated in the score, but that also changed frequently in these recordings, were dynamics and character of the music. For example, in *Don Agustín Bardi* (example on next page) the music starts at a brisk tempo, but by measures six and seven, Salgán and his band begin to slow the tempo. By the time they arrive at measure nine where the main motive is repeated, the tempo is significantly slower; as a result, the music becomes darker in character.\(^5^7\)

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\(^5^6\) Daniel Binelli, interview by Asis Reyes, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, January 2, 2012.

Due to his formal training, Piazzolla notates the music professionally and, like any other classically trained composer, uses standard terms like *ritardando, ritenuto, accelerando, meno mosso e più cantabile*, and *agitato*. However, in addition to these conventional Italian markings, Piazzolla also included Spanish indications such as *rápido* (fast), *dejar vibrar* (let vibrate), and *diabólicamente* (diabolically), found in *Tango del Diablo*. Piazzolla was fluent in Spanish, Italian, French, and English, and English and French expression marks can be found in some his works such as *C’est fini, Psicosis*, and *Recuerdo a New York*.

Even though Piazzolla’s music is well marked, not every musical expression is notated. In contrast to modern approaches to music interpretation in which performers strictly adhere to

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58 Tempo and expression marks are my designation.
the indications in the score, Piazzolla’s music leaves room for the performer to add his or her own voice to the music. For example, renowned bandoneón player and former member of Piazzolla’s ensembles Leopoldo Federico performs the bandoneón solo *Pedro y Pedro* with so much rubato that the composition sounds like an improvised fantasia.

**EXAMPLE 3.20 Pedro y Pedro**, mm. 1-6, chordal texture

Piazzolla expected his music to be played with much rubato. It was standard practice not only for his music but for all tango in general; this approach to music interpretation is akin to how performers from the late Romantic period interpreted the music of their time and of previous eras. World-renowned jazz musician Gary Burton, who frequently played and recorded

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with Astor, recalls how the composer and his band frequently used rubato in the music: “There were spots in the music where we would come up to a tempo change, this is a big thing; in jazz, you start the song and it is same tempo through the entire song. In tango, they change tempo frequently. Suddenly, you get slower and heavier, and then fast again.”

An important performance practice aspect about tango bands is that rubato is practiced as an ensemble. This explains why the music is highly dramatic despite its lack of rubato markings by its composers. Piazzolla also rehearsed rubato with his bands. Often, expression marks such as rubato, dynamics, and tempo were added and altered during rehearsals; in Piazzolla’s case, these markings would sometimes change according to the ensemble and venue.

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60 Gary Burton, interviewed by Asis Reyes, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, February 1, 2012.
61 Daniel Binelli, interviewed by Asis Reyes, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, January 2, 2012.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

What shall I do tomorrow? I do not know. I believe God is leading me. He was slowly pushing me to what I desired. First music, then tango. Until I reached my true love: chamber music. I have just finished several tango studies for flute, I hope the work circulates to the music conservatories around the world.

-Astor Piazzolla, quoted by his daughter Diana

Introduction

In this chapter, each of the Tango-Études receives a formal and stylistic analysis accompanied by additional background information. This chapter also includes interpretive suggestions for performers in the areas of melodic structure and phrasing, thematic development, texture, harmony, and form. These suggestions are designed to enhance a performer’s ability to realize an idiomatic performance of each Tango-Étude without compromising his or her own musical integrity.

The Tango-Études are not only an example of popular music; they also display erudite compositional elements Piazzolla learned from influential composers and teachers such as Alberto Ginastera and Nadia Boulanger. As previously mentioned, New Tango uses traditional tango as its foundation but expands upon it by incorporating elements of other musical styles, such as jazz, rock, Baroque, and modern compositional technique. As a result, structural difficulties in certain passages of the Tango-Études necessitate a formal analysis. If these

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1 Diana Piazzolla, Astor (Buenos Aires: Emece Editores, 1987), 223. Translation mine. The original Spanish text reads: “¿Qué haré mañana? No sé. Creo que Dios me va llevando. Él me fue empujando hacia lo que yo quería, lentamente. Primero la música, después el tango. Hasta que llegué a mi verdadero amor: la música de cámara. Acabo de terminar varios estudios tanguísticos para flauta, y espero que la obra circule por los conservatorios de música del todo el mundo entero.”
passages are played without a clear understanding of the structure of the music, the resultant performance may be unconvincing.

In the article “La Música de Astor Piazzolla. Aspectos estilísticos y estructurales de su (des)territorialización,” Gabriela Goldenberg argues that these foreign elements in Piazzolla’s music transformed the traditional tango and made it modern, just as Buenos Aires had become modern. The port city of 1920s Buenos Aires differed from that of the 1960s, and Piazzolla’s music from this period reflects that change.² This new modern and globalized tango appealed to a more diverse worldwide audience and brought international recognition to Piazzolla.

The Tango-Études is a composition performed all over the world by flutists and other instrumentalists. Aware of the popularity of this composition, publisher Henry Lemoine continues to make new transcriptions of the work for other instruments. The original edition for solo flute, or alternatively violin, was published in 1987. The second transcription, or adaptation as Henry Lemoine calls it, was published for alto saxophone or clarinet in 1989. The third transcription was for saxophone and piano and was published in 2003, eleven years after Piazzolla’s death in 1992. Despite composing the piano part for the third transcription, Piazzolla never had the opportunity to review the proof for publication. In 2006, two transcriptions were published: one for solo piano and another for flute and piano. The sixth transcription for bassoon and piano was published in 2008. The seventh transcription, published in 2011, was for solo guitar.³ The most recent transcription for 2 flutes was published in 2014.

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All of these transcriptions contain extremely similar melodic content, with only minor changes made to articulation and tessitura that do not alter the substance of the music. In the example below, guitarist Manuel Barrueco, arranger of the solo guitar, has made alterations by adding a rhythmic second voice and transposing the key from A minor to E minor, but the melodic material contained in original flute solo is otherwise preserved.

**EXAMPLE 4.1 Étude no. 1, guitar edition, arr. Manuel Barrueco, mm. 1-6**

Barrueco explains his realization of the added melody: “My objective when making these arrangements for solo guitar was to add all that to me seemed implied, whether voices, harmonies, or accompaniment figures, while trying to stay completely in style and hoping that everything would end up sounding as though it was written by Piazzolla himself.”

Arrangers of the earlier transcriptions followed a similar trend. The second transcription for solo alto saxophone, or alternatively solo clarinet, is identical to the original edition for solo flute but is pitched a major 6th lower on saxophone and major 2nd lower on clarinet as the

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4 Although the melodic material remains the same, the additional voice in the guitar edition is not the same as the accompaniment that Piazzolla wrote for the other editions. Famed guitarist Manuel Barrueco realized this additional guitar part.

saxophone and clarinet are transposing instruments. The most substantive change made across the many transcriptions is the inclusion of a piano part in the third transcription, for saxophone and piano. For this transcription of the *Tango-Études*, Piazzolla composed a piano accompaniment in 1989 at the suggestion of Claude Delangle, saxophone professor at the Paris Conservatory. This is a completely new part; the original solo flute edition was unaccompanied. Importantly, Piazzolla’s health was deteriorating by this time, and this piano part is among the last of Piazzolla’s works.⁶

Henry Lemoine encountered significant legibility issues with the autograph of the third transcription. The composer writes the publisher: “Dear friend, just finished the piano part of the *Études tanguistiques* for alto sax and piano. Good luck to Mr. Delangle and please tell him to forgive my music handwriting. I was in a hurry and could not do it better. Please let me know if you received the music.”⁷ The autograph is excerpted in Example 4.2.

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**EXAMPLE 4.2 Étude no. 6, autograph, mm. 24-33**

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⁷ Astor Piazzolla, *Tango-Études*, 3rd edition, note to the performer by the publisher. This note contains excerpts of correspondence between Piazzolla and the publisher.
According to the publisher: “it was so difficult to decipher it [the score] that the publication had to be shelved for quite some time.” Lemoine finally published this version fourteen years later in 2003.

EXAMPLE 4.3 Étude no. 1, saxophone and piano edition, mm. 1-3

The fourth and fifth transcriptions, for solo piano and flute and piano respectively, are transposed a major 6th up from the third transcription for saxophone and piano; in other words, the tonality of the third edition, C minor, was transposed up to A minor for the fourth and fifth transcriptions. Comments and footnotes by the editor are carried over to these later editions. As for the autograph of the flute and piano version, it does not exist. Yann Ollivo, editor of the flute and piano edition, explains: “The ‘manuscript’ they refer to, is therefore an imaginary score, identical to Piazzolla's, but written a minor third lower.”

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8 Ibid.
Other composers have also realized a piano part for the *Tango-Études*. Flutist and composer Dmitry Varelas arranged an excellent piano accompaniment to the solo flute part; however, while harmonically correct, it lacks the harsh dissonances and the motivic cohesiveness found in Piazzolla’s piano realization. The following example shows Varelas’ arrangement.

This dissertation focuses mainly on two editions: the original 1987 edition for solo flute and the 2006 transcription for flute and piano. Most interpretative suggestions will be based on
the original edition for solo flute, but a detailed analysis of relevant excerpts of the piano accompaniment will also be provided to clarify ambiguous harmonic passages contained in the solo part. A thorough understanding of the piano part will grant musicians insight into new performance perspectives regarding form, phrasing, and most importantly, harmony.

The *Tango-Études* are unique for their genre and instrumentation. Generally, concert-hall music genres are not part of traditional tango; therefore, Études are not common in tango music. In writing a set of études, Piazzolla borrowed a genre from serious music, just as he had done with concerti, symphonies, opera, preludes, chorales, and string quartets, thus distancing himself from traditional tango. He wished for his music be played not only by *tangueros* but by classical musicians as well, so he wrote the *Tango-Études* as an introduction to tango for classical musicians. He writes: “I have just finished several tango studies for flute, and I hope the work dissipates to the music conservatories around the world.”\(^\text{10}\) While he composed other works for solo instruments, such as *Cuatro piezas breves* (1944) for piano and *Mi loco bandoneón* and *Pedro y Pedro*\(^\text{11}\) (1981) for bandoneón, instruments allowing a polyphonic or chordal texture, the *Tango-Études* are his only composition for a purely melodic instrument and possibly the only such composition attempted by a composer known predominantly for tango music.

Another unique aspect of the *Tango-Études* is that they were composed and published as a volume. Whether the composer intended for performers to play the *Tango-Études* as single independent works or as a complete set is unknown. Other works composed by Piazzolla as individual pieces are often played and recorded as sets due to their programmatic titles; *Camorra*

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\(^{10}\) Diana Piazzolla, *Astor*, 223.

\(^{11}\) This work was dedicated to two great bandoneón players of the 1940s, Pedro Láurenz (1902-1972) and Pedro Maffia (1899-1967).
(1989), Tanguedia (1986), Seasons, Diablo, and Angel all fall into this category. Likewise, the Tango-Études have usually been recorded as a set.

As previously mentioned, the flute was abandoned as a staple instrument in early tango bands by the mid-1920s. Piazzolla’s reintroduction of the flute in the 1960s, which began with music for the Octeto Contemporaneo (1963) and continued with Histoire du tango (1985) and culminated with his Tango-Études (1987), went against the established instrumentation of the previous forty years. For Piazzolla, it was important to make a connection to tango’s past; the composer was moving away from tradition by writing in genres that were foreign to tango music, and he needed a way to reaffirm that he remained a tango composer. By incorporating one of the original tango instruments, he was able to maintain his tango roots.

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12 Seasons, Diablo, and Angel were composed in different years; Verano porteño (Summer in Buenos Aires) was composed in 1965, Otoño porteño (Fall in Buenos Aires) in 1969, and Invierno porteño (Winter in Buenos Aires) and Primavera porteña (Spring in Buenos Aires) both in 1970. It is not known if Piazzolla conceived these works to be performed as volumes. Piazzolla himself recorded all three Camorra titles in 1988; Astor Piazzolla, La Camorra, American Clave, AMCL 1021 CD, New York, 1989. Compact disc.
ÉTUDE NO. 1

It is advisable that the performer should well exaggerate the accents and respirations, therefore inspiring the way of which tangos are played on the bandoneón.

Astor Piazzolla\textsuperscript{13}

Form

The form of Étude no. 1 follows the three-part (A-B-A) form common in tango.\textsuperscript{14} Below is a diagram of the form and phrases of Étude no. 1.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{DIAGRAM 4.1 Étude no. 1, graph of the form and phrases}

\textsuperscript{13} Astor Piazzolla, \textit{Tango-Études pour flûte seule}, inscription in the score of the \textit{Études}, most likely written by Piazzolla.

\textsuperscript{14} There are some early tangos in binary form (A-B). Additionally, a performer (usually the composer) may improvise a cadenza or coda at the piano during a performance, thus extending the form.

\textsuperscript{15} In this structural diagram, the large capital letters represent the major sections of the work whereas the smaller capital letters represent subsections of the form.
In contrast to most ternary forms, either in traditional tangos or serious music, the home key of A minor is only present in the first A section and is never reestablished again in any of the other sections. The tonality of the reprise is not in the home key but in F minor, which is in the same key as the middle section.

The final tonality of this Étude may be perceived or heard differently in the solo and accompanied editions. In both editions, the initial A section begins in A minor. In the solo flute, the B section (measure 35) is in F minor and the reprise (measure 74) starts in F minor but ends in D minor. Based on this unaccompanied edition, the main tonalities of this work are successively in third relations and these tonalities outline a D minor triad (A-F-D).

EXAMPLE 4.6 Étude no. 1, mm. 1-2, key of A minor; mm. 74-75, key of F minor

In contrast, while the reprise in the flute and piano transcription starts in F minor, a final tonality of G minor is established at measure 93, and this new tonality continues until the piece ends. The solo part remains the same in both editions (1987 and 2006), but the addition of the piano part shifts the tonality from D minor to G minor.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{16} In a ternary form, the tonality generally coincides with each major section of the design of the form, with a key change in the digression and a return to the home key in the reprise. Digressions in theme, key, or motive without a return to the home key are unusual. This Étude raises the question of its tonality; none of the tonalities in each major section are the same (A minor, F minor, G minor, and D minor), so the traditional method of labeling the tonality of
In the solo part, an absence of leading tones (F♯) and the sixth scale degree (E♭) obscures any possible modulation to G minor. Even though G♭’s, the enharmonic equivalent of F♯, occur in the final A section, they lead down to melodic F’s. In fact, there are features present in the last phrase that would seem to indicate D as the tonic. Although a tonality of D minor is not firmly established in the solo part due to the lack of leading tones and the seventh scale-degrees, a melodic pattern in which every third note is a D begins in measure 93 and is repeated until the end of the piece. Furthermore, the melodic line <A, G, G♭, F, E> could be interpreted as descending scalar degrees of D < 5, 4, b4, 3, 2 >, with the missing <1> present in an upper implied voice. Even the high A’s in the last two measures could be perceived as the fifth scale degree in a D chord.

These ambiguities allow performers to interpret the harmonic movement in the solo part as either A minor to D minor, tonic to subdominant, or A minor to G minor, giving them two frameworks from which to perceive, and therefore interpret, the final measures.
Phrases

The most interesting aspect of the piece’s phrase structure is the articulation of phrases in the B section. The melodic line in the B section is perpetually in motion and filled with overlapping subphrases; these overlaps may pose a challenge for musicians attempting to decipher which subphrases to emphasize, for many of the overlaps obscure the starting and ending places of subphrases. Measures 37 to 47, for example, present the performer with a complex passage of descending lines arranged into a series of subphrases that can be difficult to distinguish.

EXAMPLE 4.8 Étude no. 1, mm. 35-51 beginning of the B section

Quarter rests preceding some of the phrases and subphrases (e.g. in measures 37 and 48) make obvious where those phrases and subphrases begin, but other subphrases (e.g. mm. 39, 41) are more difficult to decipher. Some entrances in the B section, for example, might give the impression of a beginning of a phrase or subphrase, but structurally, they are false or weak entrances. An example of this is measure 44; even though it partially resembles the entrances at
37 and 48 in that it starts with a rest, this measure is simply a repetition of the previous measure (see Example 4.8).

False starts such as these carry less structural weight and should be performed with less emphasis, like an echo. In order to clearly project the real beginnings of phrases and subphrases, players should experiment with articulation, dynamics, and rubato (see Diagram 4.1 for a complete graph of the phrases). In measures where the beginning of a phrase is unclear, a performer might attempt to emphasize the descending line instead of the beginnings of the subphrases.

What clarifies the beginnings and endings of phrases and subphrases in this B section is the presence of a motive and its variants, and an understanding of this motive may help a performer preserve both the descending line and the beginnings of phrases simultaneously.


Motive

Three main motives occur in Étude no. 1; one rhythmic and two melodic. The rhythmic motive is made up of eighth-note groupings in the pattern <3, 3, 3, 2, 2>, which is an expansion of Piazzolla’s staple rhythm <3, 3, 2> found in many of his works. The expanded
rhythm spans two measures whereas the more common rhythm used by Piazzolla in other pieces spans one.


This rhythmic motive is present in both A sections and is often juxtaposed against the melodic motive. See Examples 4.11. On a similar topic, Jenny Lee Vaughn points out that the <3, 3, 2> motive is also inverted <2, 3, 3>, as shown in the following example.¹⁷


One of the two melodic motives is present in all major sections of the work. In the A sections, it is made up of an ascending chromatic line that transpires in the lowest voice of a compound melody:

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EXAMPLE 4.11 Étude no. 1, mm. 1-7

This same melodic motive is found in inversion in both the B and the A sections.

EXAMPLE 4.12 Étude no. 1, mm. 42-43 and 91-92

The other chromatic pitch motive is found only in the B section. This motive is a more complex polyphonic structure in which usually three descending voices are implied. This new motive is fast yet expressive but differs from the rhythmic motive in that it does not share the same rhythmic formula <3, 3, 3, 2, 2>. See Example 4.13.
EXAMPLE 4.13 Étude no. 1, mm. 37-43. Excerpted from *Tango-Etudes* by Astor Piazzolla ©


Many performances emphasize the top voice in this chromatic motive at the expense of these other lines. The middle and lower voices are often hard to hear; instrumentalists, especially flutists, should make these two lines apparent through dynamic contrast or articulation.

The composer’s predilection for descending chromatic lines is evident from measures 82 to 92, where longest descending line in the piece, at eleven measures long, traverses different keys and displaces the melody by octaves:
ÉTUDE NO. 2

In my head I had Bach and Schumann and Mozart and very little tango.

-Astor Piazzolla

As with Étude no. 1, the formal structure of Étude no. 2 is ternary (A-B-A). Below is a diagram of the structure.

DIAGRAM 4.2 Étude no. 2, formal structure and phrases

The A’ section is an identical recapitulation of the opening with the exception that the last section of the return in a² is shorter. A special feature of the form in this Étude is that the middle section is unusually long at 45 measures, making it almost equal in length to both A sections combined (46 measures). This length can be explained by taking the section’s thematic

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18 Azzi, 19.
19 Because the first ending is 9 bars long and the second ending is of contested length (it could be 1 or 6 bars long depending on interpretation), the music does not conform to the standard notation of repeat signs, and (A) must be repeated after (B) to reflect the repetition found in the music.
content into account; in this longer middle section, the composer develops three distinct themes, c, d, and e, making it the only Étude with three themes in the B section.

EXAMPLE 4.15 Étude no. 2, motives found in the B section; measures 26 and 53 respectively. Excerpted from Tango-Etudes by Astor Piazzolla © Copyright Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris. Reprinted by Permission.

Motives

There are two predominant motives in Étude no. 2. The first, a three-note motive, is found across all three sections. This motive is completely enclosed by bordoneos, written in this Étude as grace notes.


The following example shows this three-note motive sans bordoneos.
EXAMPLE 4.16B Étude no. 2, first motive; melodic reduction of mm. 1-2 and 22-25

Piazzolla used this same 3-note motive surrounded by bordoneos in Laura’s Dream, a composition performed by Piazzolla’s band with Gary Burton on vibraphone at the Montreux Festival in 1986. Fernando Suarez Paz, the violinist for this quintet, performed the following solo approximately six minutes into the performance. 

EXAMPLE 4.16C Laura’s Dream, transcription

The second motive is the descending chromatic line which also pervades the entire study. It may appear as a single line but is often found in groups of three implied voices (four in this case). The following example demonstrates this descending chromatic motive simultaneously in the different voices of arpeggiated chord progressions.

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EXAMPLE 4.17 Étude no. 2, mm. 13-15, melody and reduction of descending chromatic lines

Piano part/harmony

Editorial differences in key signature between the 1987 solo and 2003 accompanied editions render the intended tonality of this Étude impossible to decipher. The solo version was published without any flats or sharps in its key signature; however, it is clearly in C major. This is due to the fact that the work starts in C Major, the tonic C is constantly repeated, and C arpeggiations recur throughout the work. Even the last note (E) could be interpreted as the third of the tonic C chord.


at a similar conclusion regarding the tonality of this solo version of this Étude but excluded the flute and piano version from her analysis of tonality.

The flute and piano version (2003), on the other hand, was published with one sharp in its key signature. Whether due to an intentional change or a mere oversight by the composer or editor, not knowing exactly the tonality of the work may affect how performers perceive, and thus interpret, the piece. Taking into account the piano part, however, dissipates any ambiguity surrounding the tonality of this second study. Upon taking this part into consideration, it becomes apparent that the tonality is E minor and that much of the solo part consists of added notes over piano chords; for example, the first motive, which comprises the notes <C, D, C>, are <\hat{6}, \hat{7}, \hat{6}> against an E minor chord. See Example 4.19.

EXAMPLE 4.19 Étude no. 2, mm. 1-2

In addition to resolving the question of tonality, the accompaniment part also provides the performer with important information regarding the harmonic and stylistic influences behind

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21 The flute part of this version also has one sharp as part of its key signature.
Étude no. 2. Piazzolla borrows from the jazz idiom the lush chords that feature tensions such as 6ths, 7ths, and 9ths. Almost every chord in this movement contains these added tones. See the first chord in Example 4.19. As Gary Burton points out regarding Piazzolla’s harmonic language: “I loved the sophistication of his compositions, beautiful harmonic progressions and lines, but they were not unfamiliar to me. I could easily run into the same chord progressions in jazz songs and feel very comfortable with them.”

As previously mentioned, editorial differences in the key signatures of these two versions render the intended tonality of this Étude impossible to decipher conclusively. Fortunately, the two published tonalities give the performer options for interpreting the work. The performer can perceive the tonality either as E minor when accompanied by the piano part or as C when performing the solo part.

**Breath marks**

Another point of discrepancy between the original solo flute edition and the other editions is the extra breath marks present only in the solo flute edition. These breath marks need to be brought to the attention of the flutist, for these additional marks affect how certain passages might be played. One example of a passage affected by breath occurs in measures 2 and 4, where breath marks are inserted after the third beat. Example 4.18 above shows these extra breath marks in the music.

Even though the breath marks are placed after a strong beat, their observance gainsays the bordoneos’ purpose of drawing attention to the strong beats, instead making the gesture sound awkward. Claude Delangle, saxophone professor at the Paris Conservatory and editor of

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22 Gary Burton, interviewed by Asis Reyes, Fort Lauderdale, FL, February 1, 2012.
the saxophone edition, probably thought these extra breath marks unnecessary, for he excludes them from his edition and also omits them when he performs this work. Example 4.20 shows an excerpt from the saxophone edition. Note the exclusion of extra breath marks after beat 3 in measures 2 and 4.

EXAMPLE 4.20 Étude no. 2, saxophone edition, mm. 1-4

Flutists are also advised to ignore these extra breath marks. They wipe away the luster of the bordoneos, Piazzolla’s main pedagogical thrust for this Étude.

Performance

Piazzolla uses bordoneos exhaustively throughout Étude no. 2; they pervade the entire work and are most prevalent in the A sections. Goldenberg calls this heavy-handed application of a given technique by Piazzolla “The exacerbation of repetition.” 23 This excessive use of bordoneos hints at the composer’s main pedagogical goal for this Étude: to introduce classically trained musicians to the proper execution of bordoneos. As previously discussed, traditionally a guitar technique that featured the lower strings 24, bordoneos were eventually adopted by pianists

23 Goldenberg, 7.
24 Diccionario de la Real Academia Española, 23rd ed., s.v. “bordona”. In Argentina and Uruguay, a bordona is the lowest sounding string of a guitar; however, it could also mean the three lowest soundings strings of the guitar. Bordoneo, an adaptation of that word, means an embellishment or arrangement of a bass figure on the guitar. For
who played them in the bass. In this Étude, bordoneos are restricted to the lower and middle registers of the flute. They are not present in the flute’s high register, perhaps out of respect to or in alignment with their traditional use.

In this Étude, Piazzolla expands bordoneos beyond their usual role as accompaniment figures to primary features of the melodic line. Gabriela Mauriño discusses the melodic treatment of this Étude no. 2: “Piazzolla took this element [bordoneo] and systematized it in such a way that became a mark of his melodic phrasing.”\textsuperscript{25} This might be better accounted for by the flute’s melodic nature than any preference towards bordoneos on Piazzolla’s part, for he rarely uses bordoneos in the piano realization he composed a few years later.\textsuperscript{26}

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\textsuperscript{25} Gabriela Mauriño, “Raíces tangueras de la obra de Astor Piazzolla,” 246.

\textsuperscript{26} Bordoneos are only present in measures 65 and 66 in the piano part. In these measures, the bordoneos are part of the left hand, which is how traditionally they are executed.

more information see: Kacey Link and Kristin Wendland, \textit{Tracing Tangueros: Argentine Tango Instrumental Music} (Oxford University Press, 2016), 122.
ÉTUDE NO. 3

I learned the tricks of the tangueros, those intuitive tricks that helped me later on. I
couldn't define them technically; they are forms of playing, forms of feeling; it's something that
comes from inside, spontaneously.

-Astor Piazzolla

Form

Like the two previous Études, the form of Étude no. 3 is ternary (A-B-Quote-A);
the graph below shows the symmetry of the form where the two A sections are identical and the
B section introduces a new theme.

27 Azzi and Collier, 31.
Regarding the formal structure of this Étude, Jenny Lee Vaughn analyzed it as A (mm. 1-31), B (mm. 32-48), C (mm. 49-60), A (mm. 61-92). Jessica Quiñones analyzed it as A (mm. 1-31), A¹ (mm. 32-48), B (mm. 49-60), A (mm. 61-92). These two analyses agree that there is stated material (beginning), a deviation (slow section), and a return of the initial material (A), but they differ in their classification of measures 32-48. Quiñones’ classification of measures 32-48 is misleading for it implies that this material is a variation of (A) or bears a strong resemblance to it; as measures 32-48 contain a new theme, this is not the case. Vaughn’s analysis accounts for the new material present in measures 32-48 but structures the Étude into a 4-part form. Excluding measures 32-48, the Étude follows a normal (A, B, A) structure. Interestingly, measures 32-48 are not restated in the second (A); thus, I would like to propose an alternate labeling of the form: A (mm. 1-31), quote (mm. 32-48), B (mm. 49-60), A (mm. 61-92). The following example shows the new theme at measure 32.


An important point about this fast theme is that Piazzolla is quoting another composer’s music. This theme is a slightly ornamented version of *El pueblo unido jamás sera vencido* (“The People United Will Never Be Defeated”), a popular song by Chilean composer Sergio Ortega

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28 Quiñones, 256.
(1938-2003) featured in Example 4.22.\textsuperscript{29} Piazzolla not only quotes Ortega’s theme melodically but also harmonically by following the same circle of fifths progression in the key of A minor.

EXAMPLE 4.22 *El pueblo unido jamás sera vencido*, mm. 7-14

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{Dm7} & \text{G7} & \text{CMaj7} & \text{FMaj9} & \text{Bm7b5} & \text{E7b9} & \text{Am7} & \text{A7b9} \\
\end{array}
\]

Piazzolla is not the only composer to pay homage to Ortega’s song. American composer Frederic Rzewski wrote a set of 36 variations in 1976 and dedicated the work to Ursula Oppens, piano professor at the City University of New York’s Graduate Center.

The tonal scheme of this Étude is of particular interest, for, in a point of departure from standard ternary form in tango, all three main sections of this Étude are in the key of A minor. In standard ternary form tango, the B section would vary in key from the A sections.

\textsuperscript{29} This popular song was composed in June of 1973. The song became an anthem of the Chilean resistance against the Pinochet regime. It is not known if Piazzolla and Ortega ever met. It is known, however, that Piazzolla knew Ortega’s music; according to Joaquín López Gonzáles, Piazzolla used fragments of the song *Venceremos* (We Shall Overcome) in the film score *Il pleut sur Santiago* (It Rains in Santiago) (1975), 36. For more information, see Joaquín López Gonzáles, “La música cinematográfica de Astor Piazzolla,” *Imafronen*, no. 18 (2006): 29-44.
Concerning themes, a single fast and energetic theme is present in both A sections; it is constructed using the well-established <3, 3, 2> rhythmic pattern found in some of the other Études. Example 4.23 shows this theme.


Piazzolla contrasts themes in the A section with a B theme that is slower in tempo and sadder in mood (*Meno mosso e più cantabile*). Example 4.25 shows this slow theme.
An important performance aspect of this theme is its indicated tempo: *Meno mosso e più cantabile*, not *largo* or *lento*. Performers should avoid playing this section too slowly to avoid losing some of its rhythmic drive. According to Binelli, the musician must continue playing with a sense of <3, 3, 2> even if it is not written in the music. He changes the accentuation of the published score to bring out the <3, 3, 2> rhythm. He suggests the following articulation:

**Motives**

The descending scale (often chromatic) common in Piazzolla’s work is also present in this Étude no. 3. It is pervasive throughout the entire work and can often be found in the lower implied voice of compound lines; measures 1-12 (Example 4.27) demonstrates the lower implied voices.
There are other sections in the music, measures 49-53 for example, where a single lower implied voice might be more difficult for performers and listeners to perceive for two reasons: registration and temporal displacement. This implied voice is written in the lowest, and thus weakest, register of the flute.\textsuperscript{30} From a temporal perspective, each note of this line is placed on the downbeat of each measure and is in some cases, every other measure. Because of its temporal displacement, both the performer and listeners might be unaware this line even exists. However, this line is present nonetheless, and performers—especially flutists—need to bring out those notes that happen on downbeats with other means such as sharp articulations and stronger dynamics without losing the sound quality.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30} The lower register of the flute does not project as well as the middle or high register. Accents and loud articulations are especially difficult for performers to execute in the lower register.

\textsuperscript{31} Claudio Barile, interviewed by Asis Reyes, West Palm Beach, Florida, February 2, 2012.
Performance

As previously mentioned in chapter three, it is standard practice for tangueros to ornament the melody and vary the rhythm, registration, or articulation; it is through changes such as these that they add their own artistry to the music. In the Études, there are passages in which a musician can alter the melody by changing the registration of a few notes or even a passage; for example, measure 43 contains four repeated notes. If some of these notes are raised or lowered an octave, the melody becomes more dramatic. Example 4.29 juxtaposes the original measure 43 against one of the interpretations Binelli suggested when performing this measure.\textsuperscript{32}

EXAMPLE 4.29 Étude no. 3, m. 43, (A) original and (B) variation. Part (A) excerpted from 


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
Articulation

A crucial point about the performance of tango is that players need not strictly adhere to the articulation found in the sheet music; they have much freedom in changing the articulation to make it more dramatic. Binelli explains: “There are many parts in the music that repeat the same articulation and rhythm and this is boring; it is just plain ugly. You cannot play everything the same.”\textsuperscript{33} For example, measures 27 and 28 sound more forceful when played staccato. In addition, changing the accents, especially those that fall on the offbeat, adds more swing to the music. Example 4.30 illustrates Binelli’s suggested alterations.\textsuperscript{34}

EXAMPLE 4.30 Étude no. 3, mm. 28-29, (A) original and (B, C) ornamented versions. Part (A) excerpted from Tango-Etudes by Astor Piazzolla © Copyright Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris. Reprinted by Permission.
The articulation could also be changed in measure 31 in order to make the passage more intense. For example, instead of playing it as written, the performer can add a few more accents and staccato articulations to evoke a more convincing and dramatic musical contour.

EXAMPLE 4.31  Étude no. 3, mm. 31, (A) original and (B) varied version. Part (A) excerpted from *Tango-Études* by Astor Piazzolla © Copyright Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris. Reprinted by Permission.

![Musical Example](image)

Daniel Binelli referred to Piazzolla’s music as “very spicy.” If the dynamics, accents, and articulation found on paper do not do justice to the music, the performer may alter it to bring out that “spiciness.” One important aspect about tango music is that it cannot sound monotonous. There are many passages in these *Tango-Études* that repeat the same articulation and rhythm and if not altered in any way become dull; for instance, measures 36-37 have the same slurred articulation. A tango musician would most likely not play these measures as indicated but would change the articulation. Two viable options are given in Example 4.32.35

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35 Ibid.
EXAMPLE 4.32 Étude no. 3, mm. 36-37, (A) original and (B, C) varied versions. Part (A) excerpted from *Tango-Etudes* by Astor Piazzolla © Copyright Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris. Reprinted by Permission.

Some classically trained musicians might find it difficult to vary the melodic line in the *Tango-Études*, for unwritten melodic ornamentation is often excluded from their training. Meanwhile, musicians trained in jazz, Baroque, and other styles where improvisation is common, will often have little difficulty putting this concept into practice. For those classically trained performers who feel somewhat uncomfortable changing the music in some way, they should realize that melodic ornamentation is a common, and in fact expected, practice in tango music. In this particular Étude, Binelli goes as far as stating that articulation, registration, dynamics, and rhythm ought be changed at the return in order to make the music more dramatic.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{36}\) Ibid.
ÉTUDE NO. 4

_I still can’t believe that some pseudocritics continue to accuse me of having murdered tango._

_They have it backward. They should look at me as the savior of tango._

Astor Piazzolla

**Form**

The musical form of Étude no. 4 is ternary (A-B-A). Each major section has a clearly defined beginning and ending. Likewise, the phrases are well-defined and of regular length for tango, often being four bars long and consisting of two two-bar subphrases. The clear structure and regular phrase length make this Étude the one that most closely resembles the organization of a traditional tango. Diagram 4.4 shows the form and phrase structure of this Étude no. 4.

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Although Étude no. 4 borrows its phrase length from traditional tango, it does not conform to the tonal scheme usually found in a ternary form. All three sections begin in the tonic as in Étude no. 3, but only the first section ends in E minor; the middle and last sections end in different keys—G minor and F# minor respectively.\(^{38}\) This tonal structure, unusual for a tango composition, is a significant factor in what characterizes this Étude as a *tango nouveau* composition. The diagram below shows the tonalities of three major sections.

**EXAMPLE 4.33** Étude no. 4, tonalities of the three parts of the form

![Diagram showing A, B, A', E, G, E, F#]

Third-related key areas is a modulatory technique common in concert music; however, even in serious music, modulating from E minor to G minor then back to E minor, as found at the recapitulation of A, is a striking tonal shift, for the keys of E minor and G minor are not closely related. Example 4.34 at measure 37 shows the cadence in G minor.

\(^{38}\) Even though there are no B-flats in the flute part from measures 34-37, there is an E-flat in the flute part at measure 35 which is also present in the piano score in measures 35 and 36. However, several instances of B-flats occur in the piano part in measures 34-37. See Example 4.34.
The return (A¹) also begins in E minor but ends in F# minor; again, it is uncommon in traditional tango music to end a work in a different tonality from the one in which it began. Example 4.35 below shows the final cadence in F# minor.

EXAMPLE 4.35 Étude no. 4, ending of the last section
As previously stated, this unorthodox treatment of tonality is uncommon in both concert and tango music\textsuperscript{39}, and Piazzolla is one of the few tango composers who uses this technique. From a tonality perspective, interesting questions arise from the various key signatures found in the different sections of this ternary form. What is the tonality of the Étude? How does the tonality of the work affect the performance of this Étude, especially the ending? Even though the work ends in F# minor, the most readily perceived tonality would still be E minor as most of the work is set in E minor, including the recapitulation, except for the last passage which ends in F# minor.

**Motives**

The use of chromatic lines in Piazzolla’s music is a major feature as important as the \(<3-3-2>\) rhythm. The composer’s fascination with chromatic lines—ascending and descending—is also present in this Étude in both the solo part and piano score. The example below shows a descending chromatic line in the flute part from B to D#.


\textsuperscript{39} Mahler and Nielsen employ this modulatory technique in symphonies where the final tonality is different than the home key. Chopin also uses this technique in some of his compositions such as *Fantasy* Op. 49 and *Ballade* Op. 38.
In a reaffirmation of this motive’s importance to Piazzolla, the descending line is also pervasive in the piano score he composed several years later. The composer did not merely write a simple accompaniment in the piano part; rather, he arranged an intricate collaborative part that made use of chromatic lines. The example below is a reduction of the left hand of the piano score, which demonstrates the descending line.

EXAMPLE 4.37 Étude no. 4, mm. 1-6, chromatic descending line in piano part

Other examples of this descending chromatic line in the piano part include Examples 4.35 and 4.36 among others. Similar descending chromatic lines can found in other works by Piazzolla, including _La Muerte_ (1975), _Le Grand Tango_ (1982), _Tanguedia_ (s.l.), and _Fracanapa_ (1963), among others.

**Music borrowing**

Although Piazzolla’s compositional output is vast and varied, many of his melodic patterns resemble one another. For example, the main theme of Étude no. 4 resembles a theme found in _Le Grand Tango_ (1982). Could Piazzolla be borrowing themes from his own music? The following examples show these two themes.

EXAMPLE 4.3B Le Grand Tango, mm. 119-123

The similarities between these two themes extend past melodic patterns to commonalities in the piano part. The example below shows likenesses and the use of the same pitches in the piano scores of these two compositions despite being in different tonalities; E minor for the Étude and G minor for Le Grand Tango.

EXAMPLE 4.3C Étude no. 4, mm. 1-4, piano part

EXAMPLE 4.3D Le Grand Tango, mm. 119-123, piano reduction (no right hand)
Whether or not this could be called music borrowing is a debatable question. In an interview, Natalio Gorin prodded Piazzolla by saying, “With your permission, I'm going to be disrespectful. Once, you said that you had written 2,000 compositions, and there are those who say that you wrote the same composition 2,000 times.” Piazzolla’s response was to say that he did not care what people thought as they confuse his works with his style.\textsuperscript{40} However, one cannot deny similarities in the contour of the melody, the tempo, the tonality, and the use of the same pitches in the piano parts. At the very least, these examples demonstrate connections in the music and possibly gives us a glimpse into Piazzolla’s compositional process and his approach to the music and style.

**Differences between published versions of the Tango-Études**

Although the creation of a critical edition of the *Tango-Études* is not the primary goal of this dissertation, certain passages contain blatant discrepancies in the many different arrangements made by the publisher over the years, and these cannot be overlooked. These discrepancies in notation sometimes affect chord progressions and thus affect the perception of phrases and their performance. The last two measures of the final phrase, for example, were published with sharps (C#’s, and G#’s) in the original 1987 flute edition. On the other hand, in the subsequent arrangements, these same notes deviate from the original by a semitone (C♮ and G♮). Example 4.39 on the following page shows the original score and the 2006 arrangement for comparison.

\textsuperscript{40} Natalio Gorin, *Astor Piazzolla: A manera de memorias* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlantida, 1990), 79. My translation. Original texts reads: “Voy a ser irrespetuoso, con tu permiso. Una vez dijiste que habías escrito 2,000 temas, y hay quienes dicen que escribiste 2,000 veces el mismo tema. . . . A mí me tiene sin cuidado. Mi respuesta musical sería que se confunde obra con estilo.”
Both versions of this passage work in a performance setting. The solo version is more traditional with voice leading from C# to F# while the flute version with piano accompaniment sounds more modal due to the inclusion of the C and G naturals in the flute line.\footnote{Yann Ollivo, the editor, notes these discrepancies between the 1987 and 2003 versions; however, the piano part contains both C-sharps and C naturals in this specific passage; thus, one cannot deduce which notes are correct in the flute part. See Example 4.35.}

**Ornamentation**

An important aspect of Étude no. 4 is the composer’s skill in embellishing his own music. This is evident throughout the entire study, but this dissertation will focus on the main theme found in both A sections. In these sections, each reiteration of the theme is ornamented, generally becoming progressively more embellished with each iteration. Example 4.40 shows Piazzolla’s ornamentation of the main theme each time it is reiterated.

*EXAMPLE 4.40  Étude no. 4, measures 1, 3, and 40 respectively*
These embellishments are written out rhythmically in the melodic line and primarily move by half steps; however, leaps of larger intervals are occasionally used, such as in measure 44.


Piazzolla adds so much ornamentation to his music that a performer might ask if they should further embellish the Études. After all, Bach and Mozart heavily ornamented their music in the hope that musicians would not add any more. However, in tango music, such concerns are usually invalid. Tango musicians “beautify” the music they play, whether the music be Piazzolla’s or any other tango composer’s. Even in the case of such extensive use of embellishments as can be found in Étude no. 4, Binelli believes that there is still room for the musician to add ornaments. For example, measures 1-5 start with a B (see version A on the next page), he contends that by adding more ornaments, the melody becomes more attractive and less predictable.42 Some of the tools that Binelli uses to embellish the first ten measures are bordoneos (in this case written out as grace notes), register shifts, and probably the most difficult one to apply: rhythmic alteration. Example 4.42 shows a transcription of Binelli’s ornamentation of this Étude.

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42 Daniel Binelli, interview by Asis Reyes, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, January 2, 2012.
EXAMPLE 4.42 Étude no. 4, mm. 31-33, (A) original and (B) Binelli’s embellishments
ÉTUDE NO. 5

*I play violently; my bandoneón has to sing and shout. I can’t imagine pastel colors in tango. I yell at it so it doesn’t get stuck during a concert; sometimes I beat it. Those hits on the box are usually part of the music, a percussive effect, but I also punch it if it plays a wrong note.*

-Astor Piazzolla

Étude no. 5 is unique amongst the other Études as it is the only monothematic Étude. its single theme is pervasive throughout the work. The example below shows the first instance of the theme.


Like Étude no. 3, no. 5 contains no modulations; the entire composition is fixed on an A minor center. This lack of tonal digression breaks with tango tradition, as stated earlier, most tango compositions modulate from one closely related key to another.

As a result of the lack of tonal and thematic digression, this étude may pose a problem to instrumentalists when identifying its form and phrases. Some players might interpret the form as an altered ternary, but other players might interpret it as a theme and variations. Despite this

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43 Gorin, 152. Translation mine. Original Spanish text reads: “Es porque yo toco con violencia, mi bandoneón tiene que cantar y gritar. No concibo el color pastel en el tango. Yo le hablo para que no se plante en medio de un concierto, y a veces lo fajo. Esos golpes que pego en la caja por lo general son parte de la música, un efecto de percusión, pero también va una piña cuando una nota falla.”
ambiguity, the work is clearly divided into three major sections. The following diagram outlines the structure of this étude.

**DIAGRAM 4.5 Étude no. 5, diagram of the form and phrases**

In the middle section (A’), the phrase structures and motives are varied, but they are still recognizable as previously stated material. The middle section hints as to how the composer would ornament his own music were he performing it. For example, measures 24-26 are a variation of measures 1-2. Piazzolla changes and varies the rhythm and also extends the variation by adding a complete measure in 2/4 (m. 26). See Example 4.44.
Motives

Uniquely, this Étude is the only one out of the six *Tango-Etudes* to feature the rhythm <3, 2, 3 + 3, 2>, a variation of Piazzolla’s signature rhythm <3, 3, 2>. This varied rhythmic motive spans two consecutive measures. Example 4.45 shows the subdivision of this rhythm.

Piazzolla’s universal descending chromatic motive is also present in this Étude. The twelve-tone passage which occurs in measures 60-61 demonstrates how Piazzolla composed even melodic lines with convoluted contours in such a way as to imply descending chordal
structures, for the notes in this melodic passage are derived from descending chromatic triads.
Example 4.46 shows how the flute part stems from triads.

EXAMPLE 4.46  Étude no. 5, mm. 60-62, original and reduction

In this same passage, juxtaposed against the flute line, there is an ascending glissando in the piano part that extends from measures 60 to the downbeat of 62. It can be deduced that the chromaticism produced by the implied descending triads in the flute part is ornamental (effect and color) rather than functional tonality as it happens in conjunction with the glissando in the piano part and do not affect the overall tonal centricity of the piece.

**Performance Implications**

The monothematic nature of this Étude poses interesting performance challenges. In addition, the piano accompaniment reinforces the chords outlined in the solo part and does not introduce new material. In order to play this piece convincingly, there are several performance aspects that should be followed: tempo, rhythm, accentuation, and swing.

The performer must also pay close attention to the execution of the $<3, 3, 2>$ rhythm and, in this particular Étude, its variation $<3, 2, 3 + 3, 3, 2>$. Daniel Binelli strongly emphasizes the proper execution of accents in these tango rhythm patterns. He asserts that similar accents cannot
always be played in a similar manner. In other words, they must have different degrees of intensity or emphasis, lest the music becomes boring and predictable. He explains that in a <3, 3, 2> pattern, the first accent <3> is stressed the most while the other notes <3, 2> receive less emphasis.\textsuperscript{44} I would suggest implementing this same idea with the <3, 2, 3 + 3, 3, 2> pattern where the beginning of each measure receives the most stress and the other notes are less accentuated.

To successfully apply Binelli’s advice to Piazzolla’s <3, 2, 3 + 3, 3, 2> pattern, the player must be at ease when changing between simple and compound beats. This change should be exact without sounding mechanical.

Even though the rhythmic pattern of <3, 3, 2> is found in tangos by other composers, none has made it such an integral part of his or her style as Piazzolla. Piazzolla explains: “Above all, what is rhythmical, percussive, and accentuated is what I think is most important when performing tango; these things give tango its swing.”\textsuperscript{45} One way of feeling that “swing” is to actually practice the music in two-bar phrases, each bar having three uneven beats arranged in the following pattern: <3, 2, 3 + 3, 3, 2>.

\textsuperscript{44} Daniel Binelli, interview by Asis Reyes, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, January 2, 2012.
\textsuperscript{45} Speratti, \textit{Con Piazzolla}, 97. Translation mine. Original reads: “De la época decareana yo he rescatado para mí lo que era más importante: la cosa rítmica, el sabor. Sobre todo, lo rítmico, la percusión, la acentuación, que para mí es lo más importante de la interpretación del tango, lo que le da swing.”
ÉTUDE NO. 6

*My rhythmic accents, 3-3-2, are similar to those of the Jewish popular music I heard at weddings.*

-Astor Piazzolla⁴⁶

**Form**

The form of this Étude is ternary with asymmetrical proportions: the first A section is 82 measures and the other two sections (B-A) are highly compressed, 16 and 14 measures respectively; see diagram 4.6 which shows the form of this Étude.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶Azzi and Collier, 6.
⁴⁷Asymmetrical ternary forms are not uncommon in classical music; Chopin’s Prelude in Db Major, Opus 28 no. 15, for example, also has a very short return of the A section (14 measures long).
⁴⁸As the first ending is 23 bars long and the second ending does not have a clear number of bars (it could be 1 or 6 depending how you interpret the music), the music does not conform to the standard notation of repeat signs; thus, (A) needs to be repeated after (B) to reflect the repetition found in the music.
Theme/motive

Étude no. 6 is made up of two main motives: a rhythmic motive and a melodic one. The rhythmic motive is found in both A sections, whereas the melodic motive is only found in the B section. Example 4.47 shows the rhythmic motive.


This rhythmic motive is extremely short and made up of a three-note cell which is often narrow in range; in measures 1-3, for example, it only uses the notes B, C, and A#. Of particular interest to performers is the interaction between the rhythmic pattern <3, 3, 2> and the three-note cell [B-C-A#]. This happens throughout the Étude, with the result of the interaction of these two musical elements—rhythm and pitch—being that in each measure, only one note in the three-note cell is accentuated by the rhythmic pattern.

Example 4.48 above demonstrates this. In measure 1, the B is accentuated, in measure 2, the A#, and finally in measure 3, the C is accentuated but is cut short and does not complete the three-note cell. The completion of the accentuation of the note C is delayed until measures 34 and 35 where it is immediately followed by the repetition of measures 1 and 2. All of the notes in the three-note cell are accentuated as a result putting a three-note rhythmic pattern against Piazzolla’s ubiquitous <3, 3, 2> rhythm.
In other passages in the music, however, the rhythmic motive undergoes wider leaps, and, in these cases, Piazzolla returns to the descending line motive. This descending motive is embedded in the rhythmic motive and is accentuated by the articulation; Example 4.48 demonstrates this.


![Example 4.48](image)

The other motive found in this work is the melodic motive; it is marked by the musical expression *Meno mosso (tristemente)* and it is slow, lyrical, and is exclusively found in the (B) section.

EXAMPLE 4.49 Étude no. 6, mm.70-71, melodic motive found in the (B) section. Excerpted from *Tango-Etudes* by Astor Piazzolla © Copyright Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris. Reprinted by Permission.

![Example 4.49](image)
A commonality between the rhythmic and melodic motives is that they both move in stepwise motion when first stated but move in increasingly larger intervals as they are undergo development and variation.

**Harmony**

The harmony of this Étude, as realized in the piano accompaniment, is more conventional than that found in the previous five and follows chord progressions similar to those found in traditional tangos. One of these simple chord progressions is ii-V-I and can be seen in Example 4.50.

EXAMPLE 4.50 Étude no. 6, mm. 7-9, simple harmonic progressions. Excerpted from *Tango-Etudes* by Astor Piazzolla © Copyright Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris. Reprinted by Permission.

![Example 4.50](image)

This harmonic progression is also the most basic and widely used in tonal music. Gary Burton explains: “He [Piazzolla] used the same chord patterns and structures that I was used to from jazz songs and Broadway tunes and so on.”

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49 Gary Burton, interviewed by Asis Reyes, Fort Lauderdale, FL, February 1, 2012.
Although this flute Étude is constructed using conventional chord progressions, some passages might seem obscure and difficult upon first hearing them due to their many accidentals. Careful analysis of these passages reveals that the composer simply uses chromatic passing chords in either an upward or downward motion by half steps or the occasional larger interval. Although this compositional technique produces much chromaticism, it is ornamental rather than functional; in spite of the many accidentals and seemingly unrelated chords, these passages simply embellish the underlying progression.

**EXAMPLE 4.51 Étude no. 6, mm. 52-54, reduction of chromatic passing chords**

This technique of chromatic passing chords is pervasive throughout this Étude. It is also employed in measures 68-69, 53-54, and in the piano part in measures 18 and 19, among others.

**Errata**

As with Étude no. 2, the original flute solo edition published in 1987 and the 2006 flute with piano accompaniment score were published with different key signatures. The 1987 solo music contains neither flats nor sharps in its key signature, implying a key of C Major or A minor. The 2006 flute and piano version, on the other hand, has one sharp, implying G Major or
E minor. In spite of this small difference in the printed scores, both versions are clearly in E minor.\textsuperscript{50}

There is one major inconsistency in all of the published versions of this Étude that deserves attention as it affects the performance of a specific phrase. In the original solo version (1987), measure 60 was published with only three beats (see Example 4.52 below).\textsuperscript{51}


\begin{music}
\clearpage
\end{music}

In subsequent versions published by Henry Lemoine after 1987, this measure has been edited to be a complete 4/4 measure with beat one divided into four sixteenth-notes followed by three beats of eighth-notes.\textsuperscript{52} See Example 4.53.

\textsuperscript{50} Even though the flute part does not contain the F\# in its key signature, all of the F\#'s associated with the key of E minor are notated where they occur. Most accidentals are almost the same in both versions. The editor points out where differences occur.

\textsuperscript{51} This work does contain time signature changes but not in this particular section. The pattern seems to indicate that this should be a 4/4 measure and not a 3/4 measure.

\textsuperscript{52} Measure 60 can be performed in at least two ways: as Henry Lemoine has published it, with the four sixteenth notes at the beginning of the measure, or with the four sixteenth notes switching places with the four quarter notes at the end of the measure. The author recommends the latter interpretation because it avoids the anticlimactic feel of placing the high note (F\#) on beat two:
EXAMPLE 4.53 Étude no. 6, mm. 59-62, edited version

Live performances witnessed by the author have all use the edited version. In addition, all recordings listed in the bibliography use Henry Lemoine’s edited version. The author of this dissertation, however, believes that the logic of the sequential pattern seems to indicate that the rhythm in measure 60 should remain the same as that of the surrounding measures with six eighths-notes followed by four sixteenths-notes. See Example 4.54.

EXAMPLE 4.54 Étude no. 6, mm. 59-62

Performance

From a performance perspective, Piazzollan rhythm drives the work. Failure to capture this rhythm in a performance will result in a performance that lacks the appropriate drive and fails to adhere to the tango style. To facilitate the correct practice of accentuated rhythm in this Étude, a musical reduction has been provided. The ultimate goal of the exercise is for performers
to naturally switch between simple and compound beats instead of mechanically counting in four.  

EXAMPLE 4.55 Étude no. 6, mm. 1-26, reduction emphasizing <3, 3, 2> rhythm

The proper execution of the (3-3-2) rhythm is perhaps the most important aspect to understanding and thus playing in the style. Daniel Binelli states: “this rhythm represents the city of Buenos Aires.” Equally important, rhythm was what Piazzolla thought was the most important parameter in his music.

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53 This reduction is modeled after flutist Louis Moyse’s reduction of the Andersen Etudes, Opus 15. For more information, see Joachim, Andersen, 24 Etudes, Opus 15, Schirmer G Books (1986).
55 Quote by Piazzolla.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Astor was never looking for a perfect execution. Every time we played a piece it would be different. The piano player would add some new thing. The violinist would pound on the violin into the microphone and make some weird sounds. The bass player would hit it in different places than the last time. Astor liked that type of loose spontaneity that was always happening in the music.

-Gary Burton

Summary

This dissertation provided biographical information about Astor Piazzolla as well as a description of the innovations stemming from his blend of traditional tango music with modern compositional techniques. In addition, this study reviewed biographical and historical literature available in English and Spanish as well as works pertaining to tango performance practices. A detailed historical account of the flute in tango music focusing on its decline and resurgence as a solo tango instrument, especially in the music of Astor Piazzolla, was given. Furthermore, this thesis listed the tango music written for flute and for ensembles which included a flute, and excerpts from tangos written by flutists supplemented this discussion. Finally, the author of this dissertation transcribed solos played by Piazzolla’s flutists to show how flutists who played with the composer interpreted his music.

This dissertation included two sections especially useful to performers. One section analyzed the musical elements universal to all tangos—meter, rhythm, form, breathing, rubato, ornamentation, and improvisation—and how classically trained musicians should execute these parameters in a performance setting. The other section is a series of interviews with experts in the field of tango performance, including flutist Claudio Barile, bandoneónist Daniel Binelli, and

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1 Gary Burton, interviewed by Asis Reyes, Fort Lauderdale, FL, February 1, 2012.
vibraphonist Gary Burton. These professionals have played tango music for many years and have either worked for or performed with Piazzolla himself, and these interviews are an important research element for instrumentalists seeking insight into the tango style.

Finally, this dissertation included a formal and stylistic analysis for each of the six *Tango-Études*. This formal analysis provides an additional tool to performers seeking to more fully grasp the intricacies found in the structure of the composer’s complex music, and performers will benefit from the many interpretative suggestions given based on the analysis of form, harmony, phrases, melodic structure, thematic development, and texture. This formal and stylistic analysis of the *Tango-Études* and relevant performance practices is both more in-depth and more descriptive than any yet published.

**Style**

This dissertation has introduced flutists and other instrumentalists to the style and performance practice of Astor Piazzolla’s *Tango-Études pour flûte seule*. These works feature many established compositional techniques from traditional and new tango styles as well as techniques from art music such as ambiguous tonality, atonality, pedal tones, frequent meter changes, polyphonic structures, extreme chromaticism, and influences from jazz and rock. In addition, most tango music resembles Baroque scores, which are void of any expression marks or interpretative indications, and the practice of embellishing tangos is similar to the Baroque practice of ornamentation or how jazz musicians embellish and improvise the music. Classical musicians attempting to learn these Études may lack the knowledge of practices used by tangueros who employ numerous performance mannerisms not found in the printed scores, so this dissertation detailed some of these techniques including fraseo, rubato, improvisation, ornamentation, and rhythm, among others.
In short, tango scores are a blueprint, not a complete representation of the composer’s intentions. As the Études have become part of the standard oeuvre of many instrumentalists, classical musicians sometimes mistakenly focus only on the expression marks in the score, unaware of the unwritten performance conventions used by tango musicians. They approach the Études like they would any other serious composition by such composers as Beethoven, Debussy, or Prokofiev, reading and interpreting the notes and expression marks in the score. This approach has its merits, but a tango performance without overt unwritten musical expression such as much rubato, ornamentation, and drama would be perceived by other musicians and audiences as bland and even boring.

This also applies to the Études. The Études might be a composition intended to be played by classical musicians and not tangueros, but the general performance practices observed by tangueros still apply. While an “authentic.” Interpretation is not the intended goal of this dissertation, its author has sought to inform players, in an easy and accessible way, of the performance practices commonly used by tango musicians and how they can be applied to the Tango-Études.

**Performance implications**

As this is a Doctoral of Musical Arts dissertation, its main target audience is performers seeking to deepen their knowledge of another musical style through reading scholarly research. The end-product of this investigation is a document that will help classical musicians apply the tango techniques employed by tangueros to the Tango-Études in a manner resembling how tangos are played in Argentina. Musicians can use this document to learn how to use the score of the Tango-Études as a launching pad for their own interpretation of the works.
Another significant point of this research is that it provides performers with a general toolkit needed to explore other works by Piazzolla as well as other tango composers. Rubato, fraseo, ornamentation, and articulation are not traits exclusive to the music of Piazzolla; in fact, Piazzolla learned them from other tango composers. These performance conventions are universal to all tangos, and learning to implement them first in the Études will enable classical musicians to approach other tangos by Piazzolla as well as the music of other tango composers.

A major research element of this dissertation is the symbiotic relationship between musical analysis and performance. There is limited research done on music analysis and performance of the Tango-Études. Though two dissertations dealing at length with rhythm, accentuation, and breathing in the Tango-Études have been published, they do not include a complete analysis of phrasing, tonality, and formal structure and how these relate to performance. This dissertation’s analysis of these elements and how they relate to performance will help fill this void in the available literature.

Finally, this study sheds new light to the compositional processes by which Piazzolla composed the Études and other tango music. The Études were written with implied voices or chordal structures similar to solo works for flute or violin by Johann Sebastian Bach. There are many reductions in Chapter 4 that demonstrate this process. Furthermore, unique to this study is its exploration of how each of the implied voices is often constructed as a result of descending chromatic chords; my reductions of this voice leading are found throughout Chapter 4 and are exclusive to this dissertation. This discovery will benefit Piazzolla scholars as it sheds new light on his compositional process, not only in these Études, but in most of his works.
Recommendations

In addition to the music Astor Piazzolla wrote for his tango bands, he also composed solo, chamber, film, and symphonic works. Even though some of his piano works such as *Trois Préludes* (1987) have being performed, recorded, and researched, there are other works that are still not well known to performers and scholars. Some of these works include *Suite para piano* (1943), *Sonata para piano* (1945), *Tardecita pampeana* (1950), *Suite N° 2 para piano* (1950), and *Preludio para piano* (1953).

Furthermore, even though *Le grand tango* (1982), a work dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich is known amongst cellists, there are other small works for violin and piano, viola and piano, cello and piano that are not well known. Some of these include *Tres piezas breves para cello y piano* (1944), *Tanguano* (for viola and piano, 1949), *Tango en la* (for violin and piano, 1950), *Dos piezas breves para viola y piano* (1950), *Milonga en re* (for violin and piano, 1972). Limited information exists on these pieces, and performers as well as scholars would benefit from further study in this area.

Conclusion

In a quote cited earlier in this study, Piazzolla explains: “What shall I do tomorrow? I do not know. I believe God is leading me. He was slowly pushing me to what I desired—first music, then tango until, finally, I reached my true love: chamber music. I have just finished several tango studies for flute. I hope the work circulates to music conservatories around the world.”

Indeed, since his death, the composer’s dream has come true. This unaccompanied work has not

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only become standard repertoire for flutists but for other instrumentalists as well, with violinists, saxophonists, clarinetists, oboists, and pianists all frequently performing the work.

Astor Piazzolla considered himself a revolutionary and the savior of tango music. “I still can’t believe that some pseudo-critics continue to accuse me of having murdered tango. They have it backward,” he asserted, “They should look at me as the savior of tango. I performed plastic surgery on it.”

Towards the end of his life, he composed more works for classical musicians and travelled the world as a soloist playing alongside orchestras to ensure not only the survival of the style in Argentina but a flourishing revival of his new tango style around the world just as tango had done a hundred years prior.

In writing the *Tango-Études*, Piazzolla introduced classically trained musicians to the tradition and style of tango music, at the same time aware that these same musicians would disseminate the music and help ensure the survival of the style. Tango, with its humble beginnings in the city of Buenos Aires, has developed into a universal music played all over the world, from Paris to Helsinki and from Hong Kong to New York. The future of tango will doubtless include new expressions and interpretations of the music not only by Argentine musicians but also by musicians around the world, with Piazzolla’s *Tango-Études* at the forefront of introducing classical musicians to the style.

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APPENDIX

For this dissertation, I interviewed flutist Claudio Barile, bandoneónist Daniel Binelli, and vibraphonist Gary Burton, three musicians with many years’ experience playing tango and who either worked for or performed alongside Astor Piazzolla. These tango experts were magnanimous with their expertise and insight into how classical musicians might learn the tango style and mannerisms as well as how this knowledge might be best applied to the Tango-Études. These interviews will prove beneficial to flutists as well as other instrumentalists in that they provide a deeper understanding of the style. Information gained from these interviews was used throughout this dissertation, especially in chapters three and four which dealt with style and performance practice.

The interviews were conducted according to the CUNY Human Research Protection Program protocols which comply with Federal and State regulations. The interviewees signed a consent form agreeing to be interviewed and agreed that relevant information and results from the interview would be published in a dissertation affiliated with CUNY.

The interviews were recorded using a Zoom H2 and the audio recordings were heard only by my advisor Antoni Pizà and myself. These recordings are stored in a locked file cabinet at the City University of New York, to which only I, and my advisor, have access to.

The interviews ranged in length from an hour to an hour and a half and they were conducted in a quiet, relaxed, and comfortable place. The questions centered around the Tango-Études, Piazzolla's music more broadly, and music by other important tango composers. Most of the questions pertained to style, technique, and performance practice, but some of the questions delved into each interviewee’s relationship with Astor Piazzolla and how that relationship influenced their approach to and performance of his music.
The interviewees were selected based on their extensive tango experience and personal connection to Piazzolla. Gary Burton was chosen for his jazz background, and jazz musicians in particular stand to benefit from reading my interview with him. I interviewed Binelli because he has worked with many different tango bands and possesses a peerless knowledge of the bandoneón. Claudio Barile was selected as the final interviewee because his interpretations of Piazzolla’s music are highly regarded and I needed the input of a classical flute player.

I used Finale 2014 to transcribe any musical examples given by the interviewees. In transcribing their words from the recordings, I aspired to be as accurate as possible.
CONSENT FORM

My name is Asis Reyes and I am a student in the Doctor of Musical Arts Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled “A Performer’s Guide to Astor Piazzolla’s Tango-études pour flûte seule.” This is a research study of six flute works by composer Astor Piazzolla. The study is expected to start in August of 2010. I would like permission to interview you about your experiences, specifically about your thoughts on the interpretation of Astor Piazzolla’s New Tango style.

This interview will take no more than an hour. With your permission, I would like to audio-tape this interview so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisors. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefit of your participation is that classical musicians will learn more about tango and could possibly apply your ideas in a concert setting. There will be approximately 3 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications without your permission.

If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (786) 376-2842 or areyes@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor Dr. Antoni Pizà at (212) 817-1819 or apizan@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7755, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have this interview audio-taped. Please circle one: Yes No

I agree that you can use my name in any publications of this study. Please circle one: Yes No

Participant’s signature __________________________ Date: 2/12/12

Investigator’s signature __________________________ Date: 2/12/12
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I agree to have this interview audio-taped. Please circle one: Yes No

I agree that you can use my name in any publications of this study. Please circle one: Yes No

Participant's Signature  Date  Investigator's signature  Date
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The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefit of your participation is that classical musicians will learn more about tango and could possibly apply your ideas in a concert setting. There will be approximately 3 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications without your permission. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (786) 376-2842 or areyes@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor Dr. Antoni Pizà at (212) 817-1819 or apiza@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have this interview audio-taped. Please circle one: Yes No

I agree that you can use my name in any publications of this study. Please circle one: Yes No

Participant’s signature: [Signature] Date: 1-3-2012

Investigator’s signature: [Signature] Date: 4-3-2012
Appendix 1

Claudio Barile

As the principal flutist for the Buenos Aires Philharmonic Orchestra and an international soloist and exponent of Argentinian music, Claudio Barile has recorded all of Piazzolla’s works for flute and performed tango music extensively alongside renowned tangueros such as Daniel Binelli. Flutists all over the world, James Galway among them, have praised his interpretation of the *Tango-Études*.

Claudio Barile graciously agreed to a Skype videoconference interview, the audio for which was recorded with the aforementioned Zoom H2. Barile sat for the interview in his apartment in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the interview was conducted via videoconference from the author’s home in West Palm Beach, Florida in the United States. The interview was conducted on 2 February 2012 and was one and a half hours in duration. The interview was conducted in Spanish. He spoke for most of the interview; however, he also sang occasionally to illustrate a point and played a few passages of Étude no. 1 on the flute.

ASIS REYES. Did you ever play for Piazzolla?

CLAUDIO BARILE. I did play for Piazzolla. I was young; I believe I was 17. I met him in France when I was participating in a competition. He was very proud of me since I was so young and I was participating in this international competition. I played the *Kachaturian Concerto* and everything else that I had prepared for the competition for him. He was very impressed.

REYES. How can a classically trained musician learn the style, especially since many of us do not have access to studying privately with a tango teacher or playing in a band?
BARILE. Even now, art has been taught directly through the relationship of teacher to student. In popular music such as jazz and tango, you have to listen to it. If you want to play jazz, reading the music is going to be of little help in interpreting it; rather, you must become submerged in the material that jazz musicians have left behind.

The same thing happened in Baroque music, especially in the second half of the twentieth century when there was an evolution in how the music was performed. I like to listen to [Franz] Richter’s and [Pablo] Casal’s interpretations of the music, but they do not necessarily pay attention to style. Because they were literal musicians, they read exactly what was on the page; you cannot play baroque music in this manner anymore. We now know that Baroque sheet music merely provided the basic harmonic framework or structure and served as a point of reference for the musicians. The role of the musician was to interpret the basic melody and add his/her own ornamentation and articulation based on his or her own ability. If the musicians had great technique and taste, these additions would become more elaborate. Often, the ornamentations were too much and in poor taste. This is why Bach started writing his own ornamentations in his music.

In jazz, the tradition of improvising is at the heart of the music. *La Yumba* has a straight tempo; there is very little rubato. However, in *Mi Buenos Aires Querido* by [Carlos] Gardel, if you look at the sheet music and listen to the song, you will hear much rubato in the music that is not written down. Even where the fast tempo starts, the words, or rhythm of the words, is not straight but follows the natural rhythm of the lyrics. You have to play it very nostalgically; it is a sad song. This song is played with much rubato.

Piazzolla comes from this improvisational tradition. He played with Troilo. Piazzolla composed much music, but like jazz or baroque, the music cannot be performed in a literal way.
Étude no. 1, for instance, is in 4/4, but it should be played as <3, 3, 2>. To get the accents on the bandoneón, you use your knee or leg. On the flute, there is no reed or mouthpiece to supply pressure for the accents; this is a technical problem that flute players must overcome, especially in the low register. Staccato in particular is very difficult to execute in the flute’s low register. A practical way to overcome these issues and bring out the marking in the music is to play the Étude on the softer side and play the accented notes *sforzando*; otherwise, you might lose sound quality if you try to play that many accents in the low register of the flute. After you have figured out how to overcome the technical aspects of playing the accents and staccatos in the low register, you still have to keep in mind of the horizontal line as well as the vertical layers.

The word marcato can be interpreted in many ways. Another way that you can add your own interpretation to the music, for instance, is to slow down the tempo in the B section. The character of the music demands it. Just because there is not a word in the B section tells you to slow down is not a reason to avoid doing it. This middle part is sadder. It still is full of accents but the accents should be interpreted differently than those found in both A sections. The accents in the music of Stravinsky and Bartók are very different than the accents found in French or German music. In French music, when you see a line above a note, most musicians would interpret that as a tenuto marking or a long note; but for them, it is a note with more emphasis. Likewise, the accent in German music also communicates a special emphasis on the note but not necessarily a punch or heavy emphasis like in the music of Bartók and Stravinsky. In this first Étude, I interpret the accents as German accents from the classical period, an exuberance of the sound.

Marcato may be erroneously interpreted as *martellato*. Piazzolla writes the accents, but what type of accent should they be played as? And should the accents remain the same
throughout the entire work? You cannot overlook or ignore this middle section; something needs to change. There is more than the *marcato* marking. It seems as if Piazzolla is more faithful to the actual notes in the music than the markings found in the music. In our language, “to define” comes from the French for “to give an end or to limit.” When we define *marcato* and try to stay within the usual meaning of the word, we limit ourselves to only a few of the many possible interpretations. This is the opposite of Piazzolla's music; it has no limits of interpretation. If Piazzolla wanted to write every expression mark in the music, it would limit the music (and also the sheet music would be extremely long). He left many parameters of the music open to the performer so he or she could have more freedom of interpretation. I often slow down in this middle section.

REYES. Who do you think wrote the expression marks in the music, the composer or the editor?

BARILE. How would you play the accents in *Étude no. 1*? Some of the accents have to do with the inflection of the sound. Others, for instance those at the ending, should be played more aggressively, perhaps in a Bartók or Stravinsky style. In this section at the beginning, they are kind of mysterious. They should be somewhat sweet with much sound. We are very fortunate that these works were written for flute, but you should imitate the sound of the saxophone in the low register. The word accent bothers me. To me, the correct word should be tonal inflection. It is not *sforzando* but a fast *diminuendo*. This is akin to a choral effect, a fast *diminuendo*. This is similar to an accent in vocal music. Tango is dramatic; the accents need to be dramatic. Tango is a sad thought that is danced. Out of all of the six *Études*, this is the one that is most cryptic. You have to figure out what it all means.

REYES. There are two types of breath marks in the music. What do these mean?
BARILE. I am not sure if Piazzolla wrote these breath marks in all of his music. But as the inscription of this work says, the interpretation of these works depends on the ability of the performer to breathe and articulate the works properly. Basically, what I think, or at least the way I execute them, is as articulations rather than breath marks. I do not think that the notes should be long or held out; instead, due to the breath marks, these notes should be detached. If you literally do what the music says, you look silly, as if having an asthma attack; if you imitate the sound of the bandoneón, you look ridiculous. Also, if you take so many breaths, the phrases will be choppy and have no continuity. Basically, what I do is keep those breath marks in my mind while playing them as a subtraction of sound, a holding of the note for less time. As I mentioned earlier, if you combine the accents with the breath marks, it kind of gives you a vocal accent with a rapid decline in the sound. Those small breath marks have to do with articulation. He uses the little breath marks to emphasize the <3, 3, 2>.

REYES. How do you play the big breath marks?

BARILE. The different versions have slightly different signs; I assume they are the same. Basically, I take a really deep breath when I see the big sign. There is a bigger pause. The sound pauses.

Étude no. 2 is akin to the music of Bach; it is filled with smaller notes, meaning it is fully ornamented. You have to remember that Piazzolla was an instrumentalist, a bandoneón player. It is like saying he was an organist, meaning he thought of horizontal lines (melody) as well as the vertical lines (chords).

Again, the little breath marks have to do with the articulation; you don't stop the music when you reach one; instead, they act as a separation between the accents. When Piazzolla plays his own music, there is no stop in the motion of the lines; there are, however, emphasized notes
which are slightly accented and slightly separated. The little breath marks are an agitation in the accented notes. [At this point, Mr. Barile shared the following video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7rrL9ypJAg&sns=em] This is a great example because it is an example of how Piazzolla plays his own music on his own instrument.

REYES. Do you know if these pieces were commissioned for anybody?

BARILE. Mark Growels confirmed to me that the pieces were not written for him. Piazzolla told Growels that he just did them for fun.

I have not stressed enough that one must watch the tidiness of sound when performing these Études. Many flutists and violinists believe that they can play these pieces in a messy or imprecise way and that that would approach a stylized tango interpretation. This is far from the truth; an airy or broken sound does not exist in the bandoneón. There are other flutists who believe that slapping the keys is imitating bandoneón technique—not true; bandoneón players do not slap the keys. Occasionally, they might hit the box, but only occasionally.

If one gets to know the pieces well and attempts to bring out the music in the works, then one grows as a flutist.
Appendix 2

Interview with Gary Burton

Multi Grammy Award winner Gary Burton is one of jazz’s most distinguished players. He has played with such illustrious jazz musicians as Stan Getz, Pat Metheny, and Chick Corea among others. Also, he was professor and Dean at the Berklee College of Music.

I interviewed Gary Burton at his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida on February 1, 2012. The interview lasted a little over an hour, and he was very friendly and appeared excited to discuss tango music. The interview was conducted in English. He only talked and did not demonstrate on the vibraphone.

ASIS REYES. How can classical musicians can learn the [tango] style?

GARY BURTON. I first met Piazzolla when I was 22 or 23, in Argentina. His band and my band were sharing the same venue for three nights. Twenty years went by, and he came to one of my concerts in Paris. Piazzolla was very interested in doing a project with me, in playing and recording with me. He had written the music, and the first rehearsal did not go very well; the musicians were struggling to learn the music. Once we got going, it turned out that the style came very naturally to me; the style felt very natural. He was wonderful with me; he gave me suggestions on how to interpret the music: “Do this,” “improvise something here.” He was sort of teaching me as we went along.

I will say this: I think jazz musicians are the most flexible of musicians. We are already used to playing different settings and different kinds of music, and we are already used to playing without music. If we can hear it and picture it, we can usually join in.
Classical musicians find that much more difficult. They often say, “You have got to give me something to read,” and even then, if it is in a style that they are not familiar with, they don't know what to do with it; it is a more formal kind of musical education that they go through.

I think that was one of the attractions for Astor to jazz and one of the reasons why he kept trying occasional projects with jazz musicians. He did one with Gerry Mulligan which he actually was not too happy with. He said Mulligan did not want to read any music; he [Mulligan] just wanted to play along.

In my case it came to be a natural transition to get into the music, and then I continued to learn as we played. We did two tours that year, one in Europe and the other in Asia, and finally, we did some dates in the U.S. and Canada. As time went on, I got more comfortable with the music, so much so that we had planned to do another record and to tour together a couple of years later—but of course, he had a stroke, and that was the end of that. I ended reuniting his band several times and ended up working with Daniel Binelli and Marcelo Nisiman on bandoneóns. We did two more records and a live concert [digital video disc]. Every ten years or so, I go back to Argentina and do another project with the guys because now I feel a real connection with them, and it is all thanks to Astor.

REYES. The main reason I came to you was because when I have seen your videos. You seem so relaxed and unlike classical musicians attempting to play tango. They do not seem relaxed, and something is missing from their performances. What is your opinion?

BURTON. Let's refer to one of the most prominent records made by Yo-Yo Ma. I went to see him when he was working on it with the Argentine ensemble that he put together. It was beautifully performed; it was like a perfect classical music concert, and the record, Soul of the tango, also strikes me as a beautiful perfect record. What is missing, and tango musicians concur,
is that it does not have the rough edges and spontaneity—the element of surprise—that is there in tango bands. Astor, in particular, was never looking for a perfect execution—every time we played a piece, it would be different; the piano player would add some new thing; the violin player would pound on the violin into the microphone and make some weird sounds; the bass player would hit it in different places than the last time—so he liked that type of loose spontaneity that was always happening in the music. When the classical players have done it, it is uncomfortable for them, so they play it more perfectly.

That recording and performance did not have the real tango thing going. I think that is a difference, a barrier for classical players to play tango. Now having said that, there is a huge classical tradition in Argentina. When I first used to go there, there were three full orchestras there. Also, one of the best opera houses in the world is there, the Teatro Colón. This was a city that was into music and also had a pretty lively jazz scene as well. That is why I think tango has a lot of elements of classical music.

If you look at other Latin music from other countries, it does not have the same sophistication as tango. The European music coming so strongly to Argentina gave tango this heritage: it is okay to have this complicated and highly sophisticated music.

My first introduction to tango was listening to Piazzolla in person and then his records. I learned a lot from the other musicians as well. After that, I would go to Argentina fairly often and listen to bands play in clubs and hear tango performers and bands and so on. If I was living in Russia and got some sheet music and said, “Okay, I could play this”—it is culturally pretty distant. I was lucky to connect with a major tango artist, Astor himself, as well as his musicians. In a way, I got into the inner circle. Maybe I would not have done so well had I tried doing it on my own, but I got a lot of help from them.
REYES. It is interesting that some of the tango artists that played with Piazzolla live in NYC.

BURTON. Pablo Ziegler moved up from Argentina—well, it is hard making it as a full-time musician living in Argentina, so a lot of the guys split their time between [New York City] and Argentina. Some of them have retired. The bass player has retired but came back to do this one last show we did in Argentina. The guitar player Horacio Malvicino has a new life even though he is quite old—he breeds horses for the sultans of Arabia. Even Malvicino's son lives in NYC, so he has been traveling back and forth between New York City and Buenos Aires.

REYES. How much and what type of improvisation did Piazzolla allow in his music?

BURTON. In a jazz situation, typically there is some type of song form, maybe it is 32- or 64-bar, and you repeat it and improvise on it. You might play the original melody first, then you make up your own melodies, and then you play chorus after chorus, and so on, until you finish. As a jazz musician, that is what I was used to doing.

But in Astor's case, he did not want that; he wanted little bits of improvisation here and there. He wrote it into the music. He would point to the music and say: “Here, do something there.” Sometimes, I would get chord symbols for eight bars and then go back to written music. Other times, even though it was all written, he would say, “Right there in that spot when the piano stops, make up something, do something.” So I had to learn something new, which was to go in and out of written notation to improvisation and back to written notation quickly.

Normally, in jazz music, I would switch to improvising, and then after two or three minutes shift back to written. But in tango music, I was shifting back and forth for a just a few bars at a time here and there; this is how Astor conceived the music. Pablo Ziegler also does this to some extent. He is the only other guy in the group who improvised. He would vary the piano
part some by adding bits and pieces here and there; that is what Astor had in mind. For the first few performances, it was a different thing for me to deal with, but I soon got used to it and came to really enjoy it. Occasionally, I actually played for thirty seconds or so in some sections. Later on, when I started doing follow-up recordings with the group, they added even more improvisations for me.

Malvicino was in charge of choosing the music for the later records and making the arrangements. He took the original quintet arrangements, added my part to the written parts and added me in the improvisation sections for some of the pieces but not all of them. In the original six pieces Astor wrote for me, there were no extended solos. They were mostly written with embellishment moments here and there that he wanted me to do.

REYES. What about the harmonic language?

BURTON. That was very familiar to me. He used the same chord patterns and structures that I was used to from jazz songs, Broadway tunes, and so on. That was very familiar to me. I loved the sophistication of his compositions—beautiful harmonic progressions and lines—but they were not unfamiliar to me. I could easily run into the same chord progressions in jazz songs and feel very comfortable with them.

REYES. Was there ever a point that he felt your improvisations sounded too much like jazz and not like tango?

BURTON. No, if anything, I was trying to sound as tango as possible, but he was very comfortable with what I was doing. He said, “Do more,” “That sounded great,” etc. I think what won him over, and also the guys in the group, was that I really made an effort to stay within the tango style. After the fourth or fifth concert, I received a very nice compliment from the guys. As a group, they came up to me and said to me, “We know you are a true tanguero.”
It felt great. At first, I could tell they were skeptical about this whole thing; they were thinking, “A kid playing the vibraphone in tango music?” So when they paid me the compliment, I felt really welcome. I won them over, and that made me feel really welcome.

REYES. Was there anything you learned about musical expression from Astor or the other tango musicians?

BURTON. Definitely, and it had a long-term impact in my jazz playing afterwards. I learned that tango is even more dramatic than jazz, and you think of jazz as pretty dramatic music—very expressive, exciting and passionate—and yet, tango is even on another level.

He pushed me to do even more, make more of that crescendo, make it bigger, take more time with that phrase, and so on. He affected my jazz playing; I could see more opportunities to be expressive in my own jazz playing after playing with him. So that was something that I learned from him and the other players.

There were spots in the music where we would come up to a tempo change—this is a big thing: in jazz, you start the song and it is same tempo through the entire song; in tango, they change tempo frequently. Suddenly, you get slower and heavier, and then fast again. The transitions in tempo are tricky because you have five people trying to change tempo at the same time, and there is no conductor. I learned that there is always one guy in the band who is in charge of a particular tempo change, usually the person who starts the melody of the next section or plays a pick up to the next section. So I had to learn to shift gears and to know who was in charge of the tempo in the transitions. Other times, they would tell me, “we want to give the impression we are slowing the tempo down, but we won’t.” That meant the beat was laid back somewhat. I learned a lot about these interpretive gestures or mannerisms from the other musicians; these things were new to me, as they do not occur in jazz.
REYES. Did Piazzolla ask you about vibraphone technique before he started writing the pieces he composed for you?

BURTON. No, and I warned him not to write until we had a chance to talk about the vibraphone. He asked me in Paris about doing the project and I said I would love to. Two years went by and I never heard from him. I figured he had lost interest. One day, the phone rings, and it is he calling from Paris. He asked if I was still interested in the project. We discovered that we were both going to Argentina two months later. He was going home for the holidays; I was going there on a tour. We agreed to meet in late December as soon as I got to Buenos Aires. I said to him, “Whatever you do, don’t start writing because I have to show you some things about the vibraphone because it is not a piano.”

Often, people write for the vibraphone as if writing for the piano. Sometimes, composers write three notes down here and then one up here; I can’t do that with four sticks. Often, what they write is not playable, and I have to rewrite the entire part to make it something that I can actually execute. So I warned him not to write until I saw him so I could show him things to avoid when writing for the instrument. In fact, he told me one of the ways he writes different parts was on the piano; when writing for the guitar for example, anything he could play with his left hand, he knew the guitar player could play.

I showed up in Buenos Aires, and he and a couple of musicians—I think Pablo was there—were all excited about the music. As soon as I walked in, Astor told me that as soon as he got off the phone with me, he could hear all this music and picture it in his head, and he said, “I have finished writing your part.”

The music turned out to be ninety percent playable; I only had to fix a few things here and there. Still, I could not picture how the music sounded; all I had was my part, and I did not
know what else was going on. I tried practicing some of the more complicated parts; I still did not know what it was supposed to sound like until the band got together and then it made sense. Fortunately, everybody else was reading the music for the first time too, so I was not trying to catch up with them because they were also working it out as well.

REYES. Was Piazzolla comfortable with you "fixing" the other ten percent of the music so it could be played on the vibraphone?

BURTON. He was totally okay with it. He wanted the essence of the music more than the precision or exact lines or way of playing. He wanted to hear what I was going to do with it, and then he would make more suggestions. One day, I accidentally hit the music stand and it made a big noise; he said that was great and encouraged me to do more of it. He also encouraged the other guys to do percussive effects on their instruments as well.

REYES. Was the composition *Vibraphonissimo* written for you?

BURTON. Yes.

REYES. Did you have to make adjustments to the music in order to make it playable on the vibraphone?

BURTON. On that particular song, a little bit. He had written this long solo that was very difficult to learn. There were a few things that I could not play because of the placement of the notes, and I had to adjust them. I was very concerned about that piece because we set the recording session to be a live recording at the Montreux festival and that was only our fourth concert, so it was not like we had had enough rehearsal time to get ready for it. I was worried each night that I would have trouble getting through my solo section, that I would hit wrong notes, or that I would forget where I was in the music. I still remember that after we did our
sound check and everyone left, I stayed for about half an hour to practice that piece just to try to make sure I was ready.

We did not get to play until after midnight. It was a long night; Miles Davis played first, and finally, we got on. I was kind of exhausted, and none of us thought the concert went particularly well. I said to Astor, "When we finish the tour, we will go into a studio and we will record the music again and that is what we will use for the record." Then, I got the tapes of the concert. I listened to them and thought they were terrific. I edited the master tapes and sent them back to the record company, and that is what was released. It turned out to be a far better concert than I initially thought. At that time, I was so focused on getting my own part that I did not pay attention to what the overall performance was like.

Well, in that piece I changed a few things, but 95% is what he wrote.

REYES. Generally, I have been having trouble locating original scores of Piazzolla’s music. I definitely cannot find the autograph of the Tango-Études. Do you have the autograph music for Vibraphonisimo?

BURTON. No one has the music; it is a curious thing. He had one copyist, the guy who did all the music for him in Buenos Aires. This copyist had copies of practically everything Astor ever wrote. Malvicino mentioned his name to me, but I don’t remember his name. Anytime Malvicino needed any arrangement, whether for quintet or octet, he would go to this copyist.

He kept copies of everything, except one knows what happened to the music for the record that we made together. There are six pieces on this record, and the music has never shown up. No one seems to have it. I do not have it either. Some people have actually transcribed all the parts to some of the music so they could play it. As far as I know, the original charts that we used
during that year of touring disappeared, and nobody had extra copies—at least not the original musicians themselves, including Malvicino, who would be the one most likely to still have some.

Even when I did more recordings and concerts with the musicians, we were never able to play any of the pieces from the original, including Laura’s Dream, Little Italy, and some of the other ones that we would have liked to bring back and do over again. We did not have parts for them.

REYES. Do you have any advice for classical musicians on how to learn the style?

BURTON. I think the answer is more drama, more passion. If there is a flourish, make more of it. If there is a crescendo, make more crescendo. I think classical musicians have a tendency of worrying about overdoing it—making it too flashy or too dramatic or something—and they think they might get criticized for that.

Tango absolutely calls for it; think of the dancers. Flute players who have played these pieces for me often struggle with the technique, and they sound too mechanical. You need to do much more with the Études. You need more expression. Melodic phrases rise and fall when we play them, and in the case of tango, they are going to rise more and fall more; the dynamics will be exaggerated; pauses will be more dramatic. Whatever it is, make more of it in tango.

In fact, when I play tango, I always think of the dancers doing their thing. They give me the mental image I feel the music is meant to express. I also used to listen to the traditional tango—some of the old records. These bands were not playing modern contemporary Piazzolla-styled tango, but the groove was there, the passion was there. For instance, some of the tango orchestras—when they had violin sections and everything going—that music would make me want to dance.
Notes on interview with Daniel Binelli

Daniel Binelli started playing the bandoneón at the early age of 9. Throughout his career, he has played in various ensembles, including duets and quintets, and has been a member of distinguished bands such as Stampone’s, Pugliese's, and Piazzolla’s. As a soloist, he has traveled around the world and has played and recorded with many major orchestras. In addition, he is a composer and arranger of tango music as well as chamber music. His music displays elements and influences from other tango composers such as Pugliese and Piazzolla as well as classical composers such as Stravinsky and Bartók.

This interview took place in Binelli’s apartment on the Upper East Side in New York City on 3 January 2012. It was about an hour and a half long. The interview was done in Spanish, and the atmosphere was relaxed.

ASIS REYES. Tango improvisation.

DANIEL BINELLI. The word improvisation is new in tango, but there are a few of us who practice it. The improvisation is not the same as the one in jazz. Piazzolla was one of the composers who started improvisation in tango, and then came my generation. Horacio Malvicino and Pablo Ziegler were both jazz players but did not improvise in a jazz manner in tango. Again, Piazzolla was one of the first to make use of improvisation.

Jazz and Tango are two different styles, and the improvisation in each is likewise different. In jazz, improvisation happens over chord progressions in the first and second part of a work, usually in 16- and 32-bar sections.

REYES. Swing?
BINELLI. In tango, swing is the feeling of 4, but not a straight 4. It needs to be fluid; it is a special 4. The musician must float with the four. Another important aspect about the swing is the marcato, especially as found in compositions such as the La Yumba and other works by Osvaldo Pugliese. The first beat is accented and the second beat is somewhat delayed. In order to play the tango style or mannerisms of the music, it is extremely important the musician learns tango via direct transmission or by studying it with a tango master. A book may give an idea about the style, but it is only through direct transmission from a teacher that one learns the proper style. This is akin to learning a musical instrument, the bandoneón for example. You really can’t learn how to play an instrument from a "how-to" book, for the best instruction comes from a teacher.

The accentuation must be brought out, or else is not Piazzolla. Also, the musicians must be very well trained to bring out the accentuations and the fast rhythms of this particular song.

REYES. Do you think there are similarities between the bandoneón and the flute?

BINELLI. Yes, the flute may imitate the style and phrasing of the bandoneón. The pulse that the bandoneón gives is a bit heavier and more penetrating. Arturo Schneider was able to play the style just as Piazzolla wanted it.

There are other wind instruments with heavier projection, such as the saxophone and the baritone saxophone, that are able to produce a well-stylized tango. Piazzolla had the opportunity to work with Gerry Mulligan in the 1970s, and Mulligan was able to assimilate the composer's style; even the baritone saxophone with its heavy sound was able to get Piazzolla’s style. There are also saxophone quartets in Buenos Aires that play the tango in just the right style that the tango should be played.
REYES. What do you think of the tango that is played abroad, (not in Buenos Aires) in places such as New York, Paris, and Finland?

BINELLI. Finnish tango smells smells more European; fundamentally, the accent falls on the fourth beat (or second half of the fourth beat).

REYES. Do you think people in Paris or New York play real tango?

BINELLI. Yes, people play tango very well in those places. Many of us have traveled abroad, and those musicians have been very receptive to the style and have learned it from us. In addition, there are many Argentine tangueros abroad that have spread the style and the teaching of the bandoneón.

A very important thing to keep in mind is that the place where one lives contains certain elements native to that place or that have a special affinity to that place, and these elements help in the interpretation of the music. Currently, the tango is becoming universal due to different musicians playing it all over the world in addition to various mediums such as the internet and radio helping to dissipate the music.

REYES. What about the future of the tango?

BINELLI. The future of the tango is in the hands of young musicians who play it well. They play well and are very musical. They are very conscientious of the style.

REYES. In what setting do you prefer playing the tango?

BINELLI. I like playing tangos with guitarists. I have been very fortunate to play with excellent guitar players. I like it a lot because I can improvise. I also enjoy dancing tango; fundamentally, in order for you to really understand the tango, you must learn to dance it. I also enjoy playing in all settings with all ensembles.
REYES. What advice would you give to classical musicians in order to learn the style?

BINELLI. For those who know nothing about the style but are attracted to it, my advice is to learn the dance. In order to understand the style and to feel the rhythm and phrasing of the music, you must dance it.

If the student already has attained mastery of an instrument, he/she should learn the basic accentuation of the music which gives the style its “corte” (swing). Without the corte, the tango loses its character.

You must study tango as if you were studying another musical period. You must study the different tango composers—Salgán, Pugliese, and Piazzolla, among others—as if you were studying Mozart, Chopin, Bartók, or any other European composer. The music of each of these tango composers contains certain characteristics that make it unique. For instance, each of these composers accentuates their music differently.

Salgán is the most syncopated out of all of the composers. He writes in three parts like most pieces written before 1950—A don Agustín Bardi and A Fuego Lento are a couple examples. Piazzolla, on the other hand, writes in two parts, a slow and a fast part, versus the other composers who write in three parts. In many ways, Piazzolla's way of playing the tango is a continuation of Aníbal Troilo's.

Salgan brought a new richness to tango music. He composed his own music in addition to his arrangements of other classic composers’ works, for example the tango Ojos Negros.

The current state of tango is like jazz. It is spreading all over the world. New types of tango will emerge, and they should be respected just as the Argentine tango is. I could say tango that is played outside of Argentina’s borders is not tango, but that would be closing the doors to new expressions of tango. Tango must be open, just like jazz is. We cannot close its doors.
REYES. Often when classical musicians play tango, something is missing in their performance. Why doesn’t [performer’s name omitted] sound the same as you when you play the music?

BINELLI. Fundamentally, this type of music has a very unique characteristic, "a nerve" if I may—in other words, an accentuation. But it is more than an accentuation; it is something inherent to Piazzolla, his life, and his person. Again, the musician must keep in mind the accentuation and the pulse. Frequently in a 4/4 measure, Piazzolla's music often falls on an accentuation that is <3, 3, 2> (see example A1.A). Obviously, not all his music fits this accentuation. He also uses the more common accentuation of 1 and 3 in a 4/4 measure (see example A1.B). In addition, syncopation plays a major role in his music (see example A1.C).

EXAMPLE A1.A-C

This music is well written, and any musician from any country could play it. However, the interpretation is inherent to my country and to the history of my country, which is not exclusive to Piazzolla. He learned from other composers such as Troilo and Pugliese. Obviously, there are many great musicians that can technically play many works but have not lived the history of tango. By this I mean they have not played in tango bands. Even Argentine musicians struggle with the style because the times have changed since 40 or 50 years ago when tango bands were very popular.
[Reyes proceeded to perform Étude no. 3 for Binelli, and the following exchange was in reference to that performance.]

REYES. What are you feeling when you are playing this Third Étude?

BINELLI. All of it sounds the same. That would be my comment; all of it sounds the same. All of the accents sound the same. The first is louder than the second and the third:

EXAMPLE A2.

The articulation of these pieces should not be heavy but short. Perhaps out of all wind instruments, the flute is the one that most closely recreates the sound of the bandoneón. Instruments like the clarinet and the sax have a heavier sound, denser than the bandoneón. For this Third Étude, you definitely need to play the right accentuation in addition to playing the right articulation; the articulation should be leggerio, really short.

When you accentuate the first note correctly, it tells you the attitude of my country. There is so much thoughtfulness in the first beat. If a Brazilian musician would play this Étude, he would play it with a different character; he would make it sound happy. This music is not happy; it is dramatic. In order to make it dramatic, there needs to be an accentuation in the first beat of each measure, keeping in mind the <3, 3, 2> which is also in the piano accompaniment.

Generally, Piazzolla did not write down dynamics. They were added later, when he was rehearsing with his bands and had a better idea of what he wanted. Also, he did not write them
down permanently. This is closer to a jazz setting than a classical setting. Basically, you can’t play the whole thing at a loud dynamic. You may want to change some of them, keeping in mind that he wrote *fortissimo* at the beginning, meaning he wants it loud at the beginning.

You really need to pay attention to the staccato notes; they really have to be short. To get a better idea of the staccato, listen to recordings of Arturo Schneider, one of the flutists who played with Piazzolla.

Another important aspect of Étude no. 3 is the tempo. The tempo marking says 126 to 138. Since there are many sixteenth notes which make the piece fast feel fast overall, I would recommend staying closer to 126. 138 might sound too frantic.

Another thing about tango is that you may change the articulation to give a better effect. For instance, measures 27 and 28 do not sound as dramatic when played slurred; they sound better when played staccato. It is also possible to change the accents (see examples below). I prefer the offbeat accents (example A3.B); they give the passage more swing.

**EXAMPLE A3. A-B**

![Example A3. A-B](image)

Most likely, Piazzolla did not check the published version. He also did not like to check his works once they were published. He had an editor, José Bragato, who was in charge of checking Piazzolla’s music.
Again, in order to make the phrases more convincingly, you can change some of the articulations. Instead of playing measure 31 as written, you can add a few more accents and staccato articulation.

EXAMPLE A4.

Also, in measure 32, it sounds better when you change the rhythm from dotted-eighth to an eighth-note on the third beat, which matches the rhythm of the subsequent measures.

EXAMPLE A5.

Piazzolla’s music is very spicy; it is hot, and even if the dynamics, accents, and articulation found on the sheet music do not do justice to the music. You must alter it in order to bring out that spiciness. Monotony is boring. There are many parts in the music that repeat the same articulation and rhythm, and this is boring. It is just plain ugly. You cannot play everything the same; for instance, measures 36-38 have the same slurred articulation, but a tango musician would most definitely not play it the same way; he would change the articulation.
EXAMPLE A6.A-B  Two viable articulation options as sang by Binelli

Measures 44-47 is another passage that needs more variety in the articulation; you simply cannot play everything slurred (I could write it down). To make measure 43 (A) more interesting, I would change the octaves of some of the notes (B).

EXAMPLE A7.A-B

In the *Meno mosso e più cantabile* section, the musician must keep in mind that the most important aspect of this section is the accents. Although not always written down, the \(<3, 3, 2>\) feel must be there, for it gives this section more swing. Also, this section should not be played too slowly.

Often musicians play exactly what is written on the page but express nothing. That is not tango. Accentuations are what indentify the music of my country; they need to be brought out. They are like *lunfardo*, or the slang of the Italian immigrants, which was a mixture of Italian and Spanish. These things are inherent to the place where one comes from, and so are the accentuations.
Once again, you can’t play everything the same. Measure 61 contains previously stated material, and you simply can’t play it the same. Something needs to change. *Misteriso* and *Mafioso* should be written at the top of this music.
Appendix 4

Asis Reyes  
1026 NW 7th Street  
BOYNTON BEACH – FL 33426  
USA

Paris, December 15, 2017

RE: 6 Tango-Etudes for solo flute by Astor Piazzolla

Dear Asis Reyes,

We hereby grant permission for you to include an excerpt, as described in the Schedule A below, from the above referenced work in your doctoral thesis entitled *A performer’s Guide to Astor Piazzolla’s Tango-Etudes pour flute seule: An Analytical Approach*, to be published in 2018 on the following terms and conditions:

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With kind regards,

Hélène Quinery

[Signature]
Schedule A:

Excerpts from 6 Tango-Etudes for solo flute (24897)

Étude No. 1, mm. 1-3
Étude No. 1, mm. 17-18
Étude No. 1, mm. 35-51
Étude No. 1, mm. 67-71
Étude No. 2, mm. 1-4
Étude No. 2, mm. 13-15
Étude No. 2, mm. 26 and 53

Étude No. 3, mm. 1-5
Étude No. 3, mm. 28-29
Étude No. 3, mm. 31-37
Étude No. 3, mm. 43
Étude No. 3, mm. 49-52

Étude No. 4, mm. 1-4
Étude No. 4, mm. 17-21
Étude No. 4, mm. 34-37
Étude No. 4, mm. 44-50

Étude No. 5, mm. 1-4
Étude No. 5, mm. 24-26

Étude No. 6, mm. 1-9
Étude No. 6, mm. 70-71
Étude No. 6, mm. 59-64
Bibliography


Burton, Gary. Interview by Asis Reyes, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, February 1, 2012.


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