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Title: Creating and re-creating tangos : artistic processes and innovations in music by Pugliese, Salgán, Piazzolla and Beytelmann

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1.4 *Negracha*

Music and arrangement by Osvaldo Pugliese, 1947.

Recorded on LP “Osvaldo Pugliese y su Orquesta Típica” in 1948, for the record company Odeón, Buenos Aires, 7699 16970.

Duration: 2’44’’

This piece may have been named after one of the bands that followed Pugliese’s orchestra: the group of black women known as “Las Negras”, to whom Pugliese eventually dedicated the tango.¹²⁵ The medium-low register of the entire piece (with violins rarely going beyond their second octave) and the rhythmical structures used render a percussive character that could be linked to the idea of African music.

Negracha, composed in 1947, is innovative primarily because its repetitive melodic-rhythmical structures are not organized into themes¹²⁶ as in traditional tango (except for the brief section **b2**). Phrases in *Negracha* are presented in a quite regular manner, with divisions mainly every eight bars, although the sequence of phrases is atypical (Fig. 1). Pugliese composed a tango based on a non-tango idea: the creation of a form that is almost monothematic. This idea was later exploited by Piazzolla in some of his pieces.

Section	Intro	A				
Phrase and Bar #'s	1-4	a1 (5-11)	a2 (12-19)	a3 (20-27)	a4 (28-35)	a5 (36-43)
Qty. bars	4 bars	7 bars	8 bars	8 bars	8 bars	8 bars

Section	B		A'	
Phrase and Bar #'s	b1 (44-53)	b2 (54-61)	a6 (62-71)	a7 (72-80)
Qty. bars	10 bars	8 bars	10 bars	6 + 3 bars

Figure 1: table of formal structure of *Negracha* (illustrating sections, phrases and quantity of bars)

According to Raúl Garelo, co-conductor and founder of “Orquesta del Tango de Buenos Aires”, with which he often plays this piece:

Negracha is one of the most important pieces in tango and, although I do not believe in cases of spontaneous creation, this seems to be one of them: it introduces very innovative features and breaks new ground for musicians, accentuating the expressive aspect, reaching almost an exaggeration of the rhythmical aspect, highlighting mainly what is technically known as ‘*marcato in three*’.¹²⁷ In the whole piece there are underlying melodies, but Pugliese decidedly opts for the rhythmical aspect, with very strong expressive features. This composition has very special characteristics, namely: a) it is one of the seminal works of reformist or avant-garde trends of contemporary instrumental tango; b) the main

¹²⁵ Del Priore, Oscar: *Osvaldo Pugliese. Una vida en el tango*; Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada S.A., 2007, p. 59.

¹²⁶ See Glossary.

¹²⁷ Referred to as 3-3-2 in the Glossary.

musical material is formed by rhythmical arpeggios and hints at milonga, where its deeply vernacular and guitar-based origins can be traced; c) the melody of *Negracha* is not easy to find, as it is concealed behind its rhythmical and harmonic texture; d) I am absolutely convinced that the above-mentioned characteristic [c] is the cause of its arid and rather sour spirit, which unfortunately prevents it from being included in the repertoires of musicians and arrangers alike.¹²⁸

As Oscar Del Priore states, at the time of *Negracha*'s premiere, "Astor Piazzolla, the conductor of an excellent *orquesta típica* then, would usually watch live performances of Pugliese's orchestra, whose works he quite admired." Osvaldo Ruggiero also points out that "the structure of this piece strongly influenced Piazzolla's direction, who would record it himself with his orchestra some years later."¹²⁹

The analysis of this work is based on the 1948 recording and its transcription from the archives of the Tango Department of Codarts University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Introduction (from bar 1 with upbeat figure till bar 4), [00:00-00:10]

The introduction is based on four brief instances of a one-bar motive and their corresponding upbeat figures (Fig. 2), which contain all of the structural materials of the piece while foreshadowing the register and character of section **b2**. This section begins with an interval-span of an ascending minor sixth filled with stepwise motion played by the first violin and a syncopated accompaniment by the rest of the orchestra. The wide use both of upbeat figures and interval classes¹³⁰ 3 and 4 creates a strong relationship between all the motives of the introduction and of much of the piece.

¹²⁸ Del Priore: *Osvaldo Pugliese*, p. 75.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹³⁰ See Glossary.

$\underline{6}$ = 6th. interval
 $\underline{3}$ = 3rd. interval

1 bar motive
 upbeat 1 3 3 3
 6 3 3 3
 Violin 1&4
 Violin 2
 Violin 3
 Bandoneon 1&4
 Bandoneon 2
 Bandoneon 3
 Piano
 Contrabass

Figure 2: introduction, bars 1 with upbeat figure - 4 [00:00-00:10], with indication of intervals, motives and upbeat figures

Section A (from bar 5 with upbeat figure to bar 43), [00:11-01:28]

a1 (from bar 5 with upbeat figure to bar 11), [00:11-00:25]: this phrase develops the materials presented in the introduction, primarily through a two-bar upbeat ostinato figure (Fig. 3). An interesting contrapuntal feature is that the motive enters displaced in bars 6, 8, and 10, destabilizing the meter (shown with arrows in Fig. 3). The double bass and the bandoneons play an accompaniment *marcato* in 2 (beats 1 and 3) that reinforces the rhythmical structure, while the third violin presents a rhythmical-accentual divergence in relation to the rest of the orchestra that foreshadows the 3-3-2 of subsequent sections.

6 = 6th. interval
3 = 3rd. interval

2 bar motive

upbeat

upbeat

upbeat

upbeat

Violin 1&4

Violin 2

Violin 3

Bandoneon 1&4

Bandoneon 2

Bandoneon 3

Piano

Contrabass

Figure 3: **a1**, bar 5 with upbeat figure - bar 11 [00:11:00-00:25],
with indication of intervals, motives and upbeat figures

a2 (from bar 12 to bar 19), [00:26-00:40]: in bars 12-15 the first full tutti of the piece occurs – a great four-bar upbeat figure leading to the sustained chords of bars 16-17, which in turn segment this section from the next (Fig. 4). The tutti is based on the stepwise motion of the beginning of the piece and the structural materials and intervals already described. From the beginning of the composition until this tutti there occurs a process of instrumental accumulation around the motive, while it is extended first to one bar, then to two, and finally to four. This procedure and its counterpart are present throughout the whole piece.

At the end of **a2** (bars 18-19) the ostinato motive of **a1** is re-contextualized, which functions in this and subsequent phrases as a connecting bridge and as an upbeat figure (Figs. 4-7).

Figure 4: **a2**, bars 12-19 [00:26-00:40],
with indication of intervals and upbeat figures

a3 (from bar 20 to bar 27), [00:40-00:55]: from bar 20 there is a new variation of structural materials¹³¹. The ascending sixth by stepwise motion is rhythmically augmented, going from the six eighth-notes with which it is presented in the upbeat figure of the introduction to a 3-3-2 rhythm that is extended to two bars (Fig.5). A rhythmical tension is established between the motive in 3-3-2 and the accompanying marcato in 4.

a4 (from bar 28 to bar 35), [00:56-01:11]: this phrase presents three superimposed stepwise motion structures based on variations of the motive in segments of two bars each (Fig. 6). First, strings develop the motive in unison as an articulated countermelody, omitting the motive's second pitch and reordering several notes. Second, bandoneons play the motive as a main textural layer, though somewhat reduced – some of the ending notes are missing, which results in interval-spans of a perfect fifth or fourth – with descending motion and an incomplete 3-3-2 rhythm. Last, the right hand of the piano continues with chords whose upper line derives from the previous motive of ascending stepwise motion, but now aligning with the rhythmical base in 4, which unifies the sections.

Unlike the previous segment, in this one (**a4**) and the following (**a5**), the motives have no upbeat figures.

¹³¹ See Glossary.

6 = 6th. interval

20

Violin 1&4

Violin 2

Violin 3

Bandoneon 1&4

Bandoneon 2

Bandoneon 3

Piano

Contrabass

upbeat to a4

sim.

Figure 5: a3, bars 20-27 [00:40-00:55],
showing the rhythmically augmented motive

6 = 6th. interval

28

Violin 1&4

Violin 2

Violin 3

Bandoneon 1&4

Bandoneon 2

Bandoneon 3

Piano

Contrabass

upbeat to a5

sim.

Figure 6: a4, bars 28-35 [00:56-01:11],
with indication of the three superimposed varied motives

a5 (from bar 36 to bar 43), [01:12-01:28]: this phrase is presented as a variation of **a4**, with an increase in dynamics and of instrumental density (bandoneons play the melodic line in parallel first-inversion triads), which reaffirms the previously mentioned cumulative process (Fig. 7). In the last two bars of **a5** (bars 42-43), the recurrent connecting passage leads to the ending of section **A**. Bar 44 recalls bar 16, emphasizing the economy of structural materials that helps to render the unity and consistency of this piece.

The image shows a musical score for Figure 7, covering bars 36 to 43. The score is arranged in a system with seven staves. From top to bottom, the staves are: Violin 1&4, Violin 2, Violin 3, Bandoneon 1&4, Bandoneon 2, Bandoneon 3, and Piano. A Contrabass staff is located at the bottom of the system. Above the first staff, the text '6 = 6th. interval' is written. Above each of the first five measures of the violin parts, the number '6' is written. In the final two measures (bars 42 and 43), an 'upbeat to B' is indicated above the piano staff. The music features a melodic line in the violins and parallel first-inversion triads in the bandoneons.

Figure 7: **a5**, bars 36-43 [01:12-01:28],
with indication of superimposed varied motives

Section **B** (from bar 44 to bar 61), [01:29-02:08]

b1 (from bar 44 to bar 53), [01:29-01:50]: rather than an independent section, **b1** is established and perceived as a bridge that leads to **b2**, mainly because it lacks a continuous melodic line. Its primary features are the reduction of instrumental density, the cessation of accompanying marcato in 4 and the lyrical character (contrasting with section **A**, as is typical of the genre). As in the previous sections, the same material is used in the different textural layers (Fig. 8). The melodic lines are presented in brief solo passages performed by different instruments in varied registers, which provide these bars with a discontinuous character.

6 = 6th. interval
 3 = 3rd. interval

Violin 1&4
 Violin 2
 Violin 3
 Bandoneon 1&4
 Bandoneon 2
 Bandoneon 3
 Piano
 Contrabass

Figure 8: **b1** with indication of interval-spans,
 bars 44-53 [01:29-01:50]

b2 (from bar 54 to bar 61), [01:51-02:08]: as mentioned earlier, this is the only phrase in which the main melodic layer – again based on structural materials – is established as a true theme (Fig. 9). The melodic lines started in **b1** continue here as a countermelody of the main melodic layer (unison strings, doubled in the rhythmical base by the left hand of the piano and the double bass during the first two bars), unifying and interweaving the sections. The syncopated rhythmical base originates from the introduction, which demonstrates the technique of superimposing materials from different formal sections that is so typical of Pugliese’s orchestra. This occurs in the last two bars of the phrase (first violin solo, bars 60-61), evoking the beginning of the piece. The final note of this phrase coincides with the one that initiates the reprise of section **A**, which further illustrates Pugliese’s use of interwoven sections.

$\overset{6}{\underset{3}{3}}$ = 6th. interval
 $\overset{3}{\underset{3}{3}}$ = 3rd. interval

The musical score shows the following instruments and their parts:

- Violin 1&4:** Features a melodic line with interval spans of 6 and 3, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- Violin 2:** Features a melodic line with interval spans of 6 and 3, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- Violin 3:** Features a melodic line with interval spans of 6 and 3, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- Bandoneon 1&4, 2, 3:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.
- Piano:** Features a complex accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.
- Contrabass:** Features a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes.

Figure 9: **b2**, bars 54-61 [01:51-02:08], theme with indication of interval-spans

Section A' (from bar 62 to bar 79), [02:08-02:44]

a6 and **a7**: in bars 62-71 (**a6**) different motives from **A** are superimposed, without significant additions or modifications, again undergoing an increase in instrumental density. Phrase **a7** (bars 72-79, Fig. 10) functions as a coda and introduces new features in all the instruments:

- Bandoneons play a new motive using the structural materials of the previous sections; for the closing bars (77-78) they play the typical *variación*¹³² by rhythmical diminution.
- Strings emphasize the rhythmical character of the section by means of percussive effects (*chicharra*¹³³ and *tambor*¹³⁴).
- The left hand of the piano and the double bass play the accompaniment in 3-3-3¹³⁵ till the end of the piece.
- The right hand of the piano varies the accompaniment rhythm with chords on the second eighth note of each group of three.

The accompaniment in 3-3-3 establishes a polyrhythm that is a significant novelty for the genre. Just as Pugliese uses the technique of motivic superimposition as a stylistic marker, here he develops the idea further by using simultaneous meters. The last bar

¹³² See Glossary.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Again, a variation of 3-3-2.

(79) presents an open ending – as it could not have been otherwise – “in the Pugliese style”.

6 = 6th. interval
 3 = 3rd. interval

The musical score consists of eight staves. The top staff is Violin 1&4, starting with a 'chicharra' marking. Below it are Violin 2 and Violin 3. The next three staves are Bandoneon 1&4, Bandoneon 2, and Bandoneon 3. The Piano part is on the seventh staff, and the Contrabass is on the eighth. Interval spans of 3 and 6 are marked above the notes in the Bandoneon and Piano parts. The score ends with an open ending in bar 79.

Figure 10: end of a7, bars 72-79 [02:26-02:44], with indication of polyrhythm and interval spans