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

Varassi Pega, B.

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Author: Varassi Pega, Bárbara

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1.6 Review of this chapter and additional remarks

The pieces composed by Pugliese and the arrangements made with his orchestra present innovative features that were of capital importance in the evolution of tango music. He was able to develop certain elements of tango by emphasizing contrasts, articulations and other traits of the genre in a new way. Many of his contributions were soon integrated into the language of tango and were later re-created and developed further by other musicians. We could say that Pugliese played a central role in defining the “Golden Age” of tango, which encompasses most of the features and materials that we know today as tango music. The main elements of his style and the techniques analyzed in this chapter are summarized below.

Regarding formal and melodic features

- Motives that do not constitute themes: tango themes are generally presented in regular eight-bar phrases and are organized according to the structural features described in the Glossary. Pugliese composed some of his tangos (for instance, *Negracha* and *A los artistas plásticos*) using motives that nonetheless do not constitute themes and are organized in irregular phrases.

- Irregular formal structures and phrases: Pugliese’s orchestral works introduce important formal variations in relation to the original versions as well as to early tangos. By adding/removing sections and compressing/expanding phrases, formal patterns that are traditional in tango become varied. As we have seen in the pieces analyzed, the aim of these alterations is to reinforce or generate contrasts and to exaggerate formal segmentation. Moreover, some of his compositions do not follow traditional formal structures: as we have seen in *Negracha*, section **A** has five phrases.

- Thematic generalizations:

a) In different textural layers: some features of the theme are used to create or vary motives of the accompaniment (countermelodies, ripieno or rhythmical base), such as in the arrangement of *El andariego*.

b) In different sections: use of materials or characteristic features from one section in other sections, such as the use of the character of section **C** from the original printed score of *La mariposa* in the introduction and section **A** of the orchestral arrangement.

c) As a monothematic form: formal sections were traditionally defined by contrasts in relation to themes, rhythms, characters, modes, tonalities and articulations. Pugliese’s use of a monothematic form, as in *Negracha*, represented an innovation for the genre.

d) At the motivic level: the same motive is presented in a variety of consecutive and/or superimposed versions, such as in *Negracha* and *A los artistas plásticos*.

- Formal interweaving: the same material or technique is used to tie together contrasting formal sections, such as in the beginning of *La mariposa*. This is an alternative to the segmentation of phrases and sections into discrete blocks typical of traditional tango.

- Asynchrony between form and rhythmical accompaniment: this occurs when a rhythmical base is used to interweave different sections (working against formal segmentation) or when an accompaniment marcato suddenly stops or is altered within a single section (working against continuity).

- Ambiguity between background and foreground: this occurs when a secondary line takes the forefront and the main theme is concealed, hidden or positioned as a background layer. This is a variation technique quite typical of tango music. However, in early tangos this is rarely done in the first exposition of the theme (as is the case in *El andariego*) and even when used as a countermelody the main melodic line usually remains clearly recognizable (which is not always the case in Pugliese's music, instead).

Regarding rhythm and meter

- Marcato in *yumba*: Pugliese introduced a new model of marcato in 4 that has been extensively used and further developed by other musicians and ensembles since then. An important feature typical of his orchestra and aimed at reducing the stiffness of this marcato is the slight anticipation of beats 1 and 3 by reducing the length of beats two and four.

- Open ending "in the Pugliese style": Pugliese systematized a new model of tango ending consisting of a tonic chord in the first beat of the last bar, a dominant chord (with *f* dynamics) in the second beat followed by a rest of a quarter note in the third beat and a last tonic chord (with *p* dynamics) in the fourth beat, oftentimes with an added sixth.

- Polyrythm or metric alternation: the superimposition or succession of textural layers with contrasting rhythms (for instance, 3-3-2 over a bass line in 4/4 or an accompanying marcato in 4 that alternates with a syncopated base) had traditionally been used in the genre. Pugliese developed this concept further and used these techniques regularly. The polyrythm used at the end of *Negracha* (6/8 against 4/4) was indeed an unprecedented innovation in tango.

- Rhythmical complementarity: the various textural layers function as rhythmical complements, which contributes to the variation of structural material.

- Accentual destabilization: variation of accent patterns aimed at invigorating the musical material and creating contrasts. When comparing the recordings by Pugliese's orchestra with earlier recordings by other groups, Pugliese's development and more vigorous treatment of these patterns becomes clear.

- Phrase rubato: Pugliese had a strong, personal way of phrasing with the whole orchestra, which was one of its most outstanding features. The recurring rubatos (both *arreatado* and laid-back) sometimes occur in close proximity and thus compensate for each other. This has the effect of making the musical discourse more dynamic and leading to climaxes.

- Rhythmical base in relation to musical syntax: Pugliese developed a technique where the rhythmical base is used to either support or work against continuity in a

given section. On the one hand, he uses the interruption of the accompaniment to highlight segmentation and contrasts. On the other, he uses stable marcato as a strong foundation upon which to alter the main melodic lines (and to still relate to the danceable nature of the genre).

Regarding techniques of variation

- Application of techniques typical of Western art music: though unsystematically, Pugliese used variation techniques such as permutation, inversion, modulation, extension, and rhythmical augmentation and diminution.

- Distribution of the melodic line: one of the main characteristics of Pugliese's treatment of melody examined in this chapter is its division between different instruments or textural layers. The resulting discontinuity is unusual in early tangos, in which phrases, semi-phrases and motives are generally stated by a single instrument or by one section of the orchestra.

- Fragmentation of phrases and semi-phrases: fragmentation is one of the most remarkable features of tango music. Carlos Di Sarli's orchestra, among other traditional groups, presented a straightforward treatment of phrasing: what is at first legato is in a later phrase staccato; what has been earlier played by strings is afterwards played by bandoneons, and so on. Pugliese used many techniques in order to fragment phrases and semi-phrases into smaller segments: sudden contrasts in rhythm, register, instrumentation, theme, dynamics, articulation or rubato. This contributes to thematic variation and helps to emphasize contrasts characteristic to the genre.

- Alteration of original motives: motives are often heavily modified in rhythm, duration, pitch and/or melodic profile.

- Superimposition of contrasting thematic materials from different formal sections: this technique, used in various textural layers, results in new melodies related to the lines they are derived from. When used simultaneously, the texture becomes much more complex than in a traditional tango, which generally consists of melody with accompaniment. According to Pugliese, this was the best possible idea of counterpoint in tango music.

- Use of imitation: the homophonic texture typical of traditional tango becomes more complex, and imitative polyphony is occasionally introduced. Imitative passages often appear as formal extensions or variations of a motive.

- Modification of structural features as part of the arrangement: the aspects which can be transformed in the arrangement (traditionally rhythms, articulations, instrumentation, and phrasing) are now expanded to include character, phrase-length and melodic profile of the theme.

- Parametric instability-stability: a variation mechanism that implies keeping one parameter (such as rhythmical marcato) stable while other parameters are modified.

Rather than being an end in itself, Pugliese's renowned *yumba* was a means for providing a strong foundation upon which to alter the main melodic lines.

- Sequential process of instrumentation: in contrast to the traditional modification of instrumentation in blocks, Pugliese used gradual changes in instrumentation (in this dissertation referred to as an increase or reduction in instrumental density).

- Use of contrasting formal functions for sub-sections: the function of a given segment is transformed into a section that plays a completely different role in the formal structure of the piece. This is primarily seen when the characteristic features of an introduction are applied to a later segment of the work.

- Unusual use of instrumental sections: Pugliese varies the traditional way of organizing the musical materials per instrumental sections (for instance all violins playing the countermelody, all bandoneons playing the main line and the rhythmical base accompanying with a *marcato*). Instead, he oftentimes divides the instrumental sections by giving instruments different materials and functions and therefore creating a more complex and 'ruffled' orchestral timbre and general sound (for instance, first violin and first bandoneon playing the main line, the remaining violins and bandoneons right hand playing a countermelody over a rhythmical base by piano, double bass and bandoneons left hand).