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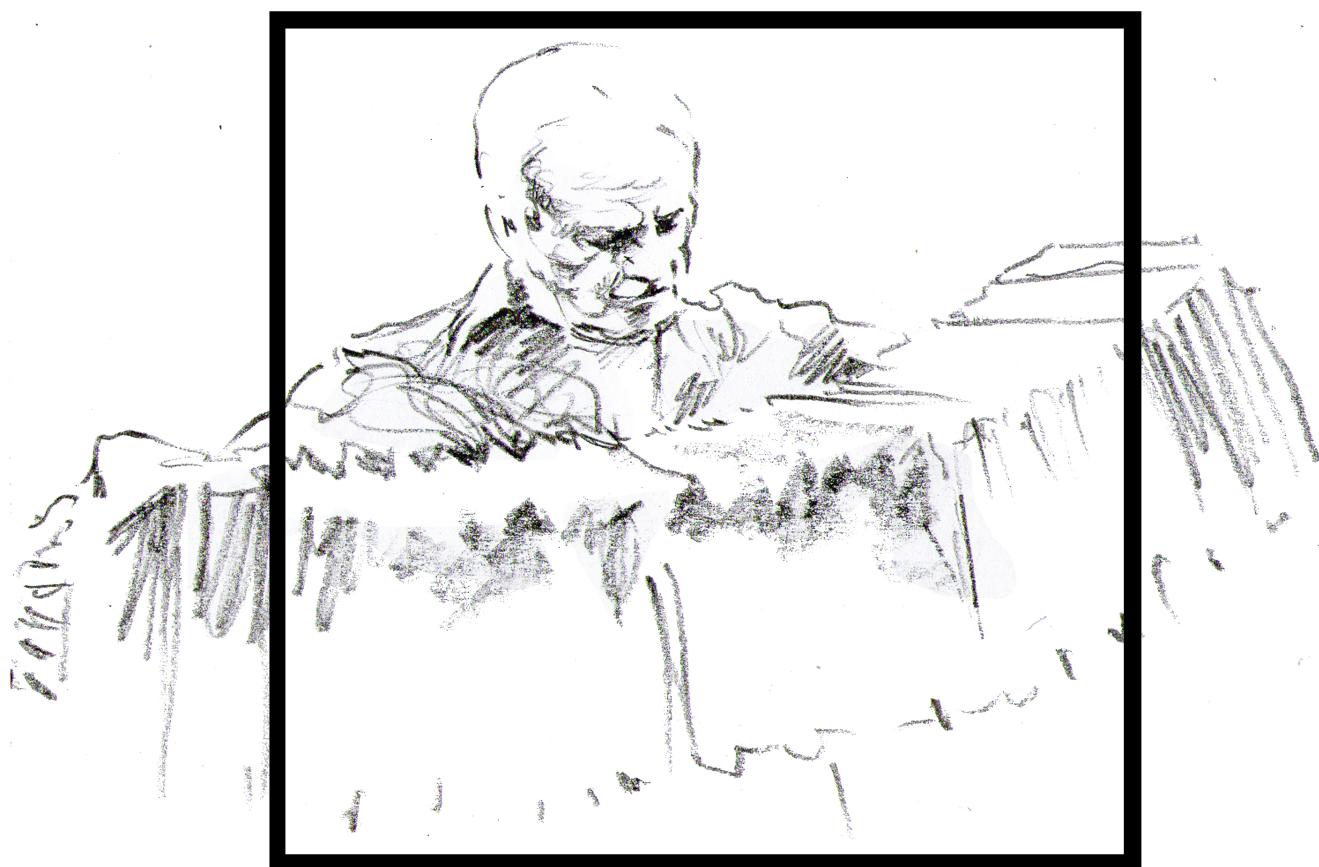
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# ASTOR PIAZZOLLA





### **3. Astor Piazzolla**



### 3.1 Astor Piazzolla - Introduction

Bandoneonist, arranger, composer and conductor (1921-1992).

Astor Piazzolla was born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, but raised in New York, United States, where his parents had moved in 1924. Thus, in his early years as a professional musician, he did not belong to the milieu: he was an alien for *porteños*<sup>197</sup>, and an Argentine for Americans. Later in his life, that duality would result in the former thinking he made “weird music” and Americans perceiving his music as tango. His childhood in certain tough neighborhoods was also reflected in his pieces: “Violence plus this exciting thing about New York are in my music, in my life, my behaviors, my reactions.”<sup>198</sup>

Piazzolla studied music and bandoneon at the initiative of his father, a lover of tango. His first bandoneon tutor was Homero Paoloni, during a brief period when his family had moved back to Mar del Plata. Some months later, back in New York, he took classes intermittently with different music tutors. At the age of twelve, he worked for radio WMCE in New York, which broadcasted for the Latin Quarter, Spain and South America. He played boleros and music by Bach and Mozart on the bandoneon. Since those early days, Piazzolla felt a strong need to stand out: “The only thing I wanted was to excel, stand out in whatever I did”<sup>199</sup>, an aim he achieved later in life through his own music. When he was thirteen, he took up classes with Hungarian pianist Bela Wilda, Sergei Rachmaninov’s pupil. As Piazzolla stated himself, this was the first of two decisive encounters with music: “My father wanted me to study bandoneon, but I just wanted to study with Bela Wilda.” Wilda was his neighbor, whom he had heard playing from his house backyard. Thus started his relationship with a musician unacquainted with the bandoneon, and who thus adapted the piano repertoire (including works by Bach and Chopin) to tailor his student’s needs. His encounter with the legendary Carlos Gardel dates to this very period, when the latter was in New York for work. Piazzolla played a small part in Gardel’s 1935 movie “El día que me quieras” and accompanied him with his bandoneon on several occasions.

In his adolescence, jazz molded Piazzolla’s musical tastes. Throughout his life, jazz played a significant role as an influence, his favorite musicians being: Cab Calloway, Gerry Mulligan (with whom he recorded the album “Summit”, known as “Reunión Cumbre” in Argentina), Stan Kenton, George Gershwin, Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Gary Burton (with whom he also recorded), Chick Corea, Stan Getz, Chet Baker, Gil Evans, Quincy Jones, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie.

In 1937, back in Mar del Plata, Piazzolla listened to the sextet of violinist Elvino Vardaro on the radio, which was his second great encounter with music and his first closer approach to tango. Vardaro (to whom he dedicated his tango *Vardarito* some years later) was a strong musical influence on his whole career. According to journalist Alberto Speratti, “Piazzolla’s idols back then were Laurenz, De Caro, Maffia, Vardaro, Troilo, that is, the innovators.”<sup>200</sup> In this period, he studied bandoneon with Líbero Paoloni and in 1938 he met bandoneonist Miguel Caló, who

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<sup>197</sup> People from Buenos Aires.

<sup>198</sup> Piazzolla, Diana: *Astor*; Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 2005, p. 41.

<sup>199</sup> Speratti, Alberto: *Con Piazzolla*; Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1969, p. 42.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

was on tour with his orchestra in Mar del Plata. After listening to Piazzolla, Caló invited him to join them in Buenos Aires, where he made his debut the following year with his orchestra. During those years, Piazzolla also played in Francisco Lauro's orchestra, and met Hugo Baralis, a violinist of Aníbal Troilo's ensemble. Baralis arranged for Piazzolla to audition before Troilo to cover the unexpected absence of one of his bandoneonists. By then, after having attended regularly the rehearsals of the orchestra, he, Piazzolla, had already learnt their repertoire by heart.<sup>201</sup> Thus, at the age of eighteen, he started playing in the most important orchestra of the times in the city of Buenos Aires.

Driven by his will to study and further develop himself, Piazzolla took up classes with composer Alberto Ginastera. Under Ginastera's guidance, he studied orchestration, harmony, counterpoint and composition for six years, applying everything he learnt on his arrangements for Troilo's orchestra. Piazzolla summarized his innovations as follows: "I was also enriched by other disciplines, from Western art music and jazz. When you learn to like this music, [to] feel it, you end up [bringing it to] the things you do."<sup>202</sup> In Troilo's orchestra he also met pianist Orlando Goñi and double bass player Kicho Díaz, who were later part of some of his own ensembles. In those times, as Piazzolla dreamt of being a concert musician, he started to write innovative arrangements as *Chiqué*, *Uno*, and *Inspiración*.

In 1942, in addition to lessons with Ginastera, he studied piano, composition, and harmony with Raúl Spivak. Piazzolla kept composing on the piano rather than on the bandoneon all his life. In 1944, he abandoned Troilo's orchestra and started a new ensemble with singer Francisco Fiorentino. Piazzolla himself confirmed the influence he received from Troilo in two statements:

I learnt his way of expressing himself, the pure essence he [Troilo] had for playing tango. But I did not learn from Troilo only, but also from Osvaldo Pugliese, Orlando Goñi, Alfredo Gobbi. [...] Argentino Galván was also important in those times [...]. And I also learned from Horacio Salgán, a man who has studied much, and that shows in his way of orchestrating, of playing the piano [...].<sup>203</sup>

When I joined Troilo I tried to imitate him... I learnt the tricks of *tangueros*, those intuitive tricks that helped me later on. I could not define them technically; they are forms of playing, forms of feeling; it's something that comes from inside, spontaneously. At the outset I was just one of the bandoneons in Troilo's orchestra, but I wanted to be number one, and I got there. *El Gordo* [Troilo] trusted me.<sup>204</sup>

Troilo trusted him, so much so that he asked him to take the role of lead bandoneon when he could not play, with Piazzolla even occasionally performing as a pianist when Orlando Goñi could not attend. Troilo defined it this way: "We are just starting the

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<sup>201</sup> Speratti, Alberto: *Con Piazzolla*, p. 52.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>204</sup> Azzi, María Susana; Collier, Simon: *Le grand tango: the life and music of Astor Piazzolla*; New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000, p. 31. Original in English.

engine, and *El Gato* [Piazzolla] is on his second lap".<sup>205</sup> As regards his influences, Piazzolla – just like Pugliese and Salgán – also came from Julio De Caro's school:

Our musical generation has been influenced by Julio De Caro, mainly as regards the sense, the flavor, something that is his own: swing. The difference is we have enhanced what they had created in a rudimentary way. [...] As regards the De Caro times, I have [preserved] what was most important for me: the rhythmical aspect, the flavor; [particularly] the rhythmical side, percussion, beat, which for me is the most important thing of tango interpretation, what gives it swing.<sup>206</sup>

In 1946, Piazzolla formed the first orchestra of his own, side by side with bandoneonist Roberto Di Filippo, whose influence on his bandoneon style was significant. The best musicians of the time went to listen to him in the café where Piazzolla performed with his orchestra. However, he pointed out: "That orchestra was too modern for its time, and because of this, it had little work. That I would not get calls from clubs to do dance dates was understandable."<sup>207</sup>

Piazzolla then earned his money by writing arrangements for the most renowned ensembles of the time: Troilo, Francini-Pontier, Basso, Fresedo, and Osvaldo Pugliese, among others: "The need to make arrangements was born in me as everything sounded alike."<sup>208</sup> In 1947, he started to compose music for Argentinian films and theatre plays. Later in his life he would compose for foreign films, mainly from Italy and France, an occupation he held for the rest of his life. In those years he wrote sonatas, suites, and other forms in the classical tradition, including his *Sinfonía de Buenos Aires* for orchestra and two bandoneons that stirred a scandal in its premiere in 1953. His influences from Western art music included Béla Bartók, Igor Stravinsky, and Paul Hindemith, which can be perceived in some of the pieces under analysis in this dissertation (*Tres minutos con la realidad* and *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*). Piazzolla wanted to achieve what had been accomplished by Bartók and Villa-Lobos: to compose drawing upon the music of his country. In 1954, he accepted a scholarship to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger for a year. He studied composition, harmony and counterpoint under her tuition without confessing his tango background. When she listened to his piece *Triunfal* on the piano, she stated the famous words that marked out his path and helped him realize his true language: "Do not ever abandon this. This is your music. This is Piazzolla."<sup>209</sup> The set of tangos commonly known as "Parisien" pieces (such as *Chau París*, *Prepárense*, *Picasso*, *Imperial*, and *Marrón y azul*), which Piazzolla recorded before returning to Buenos Aires, date back from his months spent in Paris.

In 1955, influenced by Gerry Mulligan's octet, Piazzolla formed the "Octeto Buenos Aires", where he included the electric guitar for the first time, recruiting jazz guitar player Horacio Malvicino:

<sup>205</sup> Gorín, Natalio (editor): *Astor Piazzolla: a manera de memorias*; Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1991, p. 182.

<sup>206</sup> Speratti, Alberto: *Con Piazzolla*, p. 97.

<sup>207</sup> Gorín, Natalio: *Astor Piazzolla: a memoir*; Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 2001, 45. Original in English.

<sup>208</sup> Speratti, Alberto: *Con Piazzolla*, p. 98.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

I wanted to break away from all the musical standards that prevailed in Argentina. I had done it in 1946, but timidly. My arrangements had a special jazz-like pulse, derived from cool and progressive jazz. They were complex, different. Lets not forget I [had] already listened to Stan Kenton and Bill Evans by then.<sup>210</sup>

In the “Decalogue” setting out the objectives for his octet, Piazzolla enumerates his aim to revolutionize the tango world. The “Decalogue” is exemplary of both Piazzolla’s new approach to tango music and his position as an artist:

- (1) To join together principally for artistic purposes, leaving the commercial side in second place.
- (2) To gradually withdraw from participation in other bands, so as to give the ensemble the greatest effectiveness.
- (3) To perform the tango as it is *felt*, eliminating all kinds of extraneous influences which can impinge on our fixed purposes.
- (4) Since this is an ensemble consisting of solo instrumentalists, each of whom has an outstanding music role, there is no director. A musical leadership is recognized: that of Astor Piazzolla.
- (5) The repertory will consist of contemporary works, works from the *Guardia Vieja*, and new creations as they are produced.
- (6) In order to take fullest advantage of the musical resources of the tango, works that are sung will not be played, except on rare occasions.
- (7) Since the ensemble is only to be *listened to* by the public, it will not play at dances. In consequence, its performances will be limited to radio, television, recordings and theater shows.
- (8) The use of instruments never before included in tango bands (electric guitar) and other effects (percussion), as well as the overall structure of the works with their modern trend, will be explained before each performance so as to facilitate an immediate understanding of them.
- (9) Since nothing is the fruit of improvisation, the scores will be written with the best musical improvement that can be attained within the genre, which will help it to be evaluated by the most demanding experts.
- (10) (a) To raise the quality of tango. (b) To convince those who have moved away from tango, and its detractors, of the unquestionable value of our music. (c) To attract those who exclusively love foreign music. (d) To conquer the mass public, a task we take for granted as arduous, but certain as soon as they have heard the themes played many times. (e) To take overseas, as an artistic embassy, this musical expression of the land where the tango originated, to demonstrate its evolution and to further justify the appreciation in which it is held.<sup>211</sup>

In 1957 he worked and recorded with a string orchestra in Radio “El Mundo”. During those years, he studied orchestra conduction with Hermann Scherchen<sup>212</sup> and, in 1958, decided to try his luck in the United States, without success. There he formed a commercial quintet featuring electric guitar, vibraphone, piano, and double bass. Years later, he would confess: “It was then that I started to make jazz-tango, one of my deadly sins.”<sup>213</sup> In 1960, he settled again in Argentina, formed the string orchestra for Radio Splendid, and participated on TV shows.

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<sup>210</sup> Piazzolla, Diana: *Astor*, p. 163.

<sup>211</sup> Azzi, María Susana; Collier, Simon: *Le grand tango*, pp. 58-59. Original in English.

<sup>212</sup> Speratti, Alberto: *Con Piazzolla*, p. 76.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

In 1961, he started to work with his own quintet in the renowned “Jamaica” nightclub, where Salgán also played: at long last, there was this place where they could make music “to be listened to”. In this first quintet, musicians that accompanied him include Horacio Malvicino on electric guitar (then replaced by Oscar López Ruiz), Kicho Díaz on the double bass, Simón Bajour on violin (then replaced by Emilio Vardaro) and Jaime Gosis on piano. The quintet opened up a new path in the history of tango and for Piazzolla himself:

In those days I [wrote] like crazy. I systematically included fugued themes, contrapuntal elements, the *canyengue* and *milonga*-related manner, in the Pugliese style. From then on, the quintet became a constant in my career... my favorite ensemble, the instrumental group with which I felt most comfortable.

In 1962 he played in nightspot “Club 676” on a steady basis, strengthening his quintet and establishing his style in a definite way: “I can say that by then I had started to feel confident about my music. I had realized that was my place and that was my call.”<sup>214</sup> The best musicians visiting Buenos Aires went there to listen to him; his music was respected and it was known both domestically and abroad.

From then on, his vision of “music of interpreters” and the “group of soloists” was clearly defined: “Music was conceived based on performers to such an extent that whole sections and themes were included or left out from repertoires depending on who were playing in the ensemble.”<sup>215</sup> In Piazzolla’s words:

I always wrote thinking of each of the musicians in the quintet, which is the ensemble I loved most in my career, the musical synthesis, the one that best expressed my ideas. I also gave them freedom to fly. [...] Some of my pianists improvised as gods. [...] For this, I always recruited the best soloists, so that they embellished my music. The only thing I could never stand was essence being lost; I wanted a swing of tango, not of jazz or of contemporary Western art music. Piazzolla had to sound like Piazzolla.<sup>216</sup>

When work started to become scarce, the quintet toured in the inland provinces, where some ensembles had already begun to imitate their style, a trend that continues up to present day. In 1968, when he dissolved the quintet, he wrote an *operita* called *Maria de Buenos Aires* jointly with writer and poet Horacio Ferrer, who is also the author of many of his sung tangos. Besides, Piazzolla put music to and recorded texts written by Ernesto Sábato and Jorge Luis Borges, among others. In this *operita*, Piazzolla synthesizes his musical background admirably, although he keeps declaring himself to be an intuitive musician:

You can study a lot of music, but the only thing worthwhile is intuition. [...] I am 99.9% intuition, and that is enough for me to go smoothly. Technique helps you to better use what you already have, but that’s it. Teodoro Fuchs marveled at the fugue in *Maria de Buenos Aires*. [...] When

<sup>214</sup> Speratti, Alberto: *Con Piazzolla*, p. 83.

<sup>215</sup> Fischer, Diego: *Piazzolla el mal entendido*; Buenos Aires: Edhsa, 2009, p. 296.

<sup>216</sup> Gorín, Natalio (editor): *Astor Piazzolla: a manera de memorias*, p. 39.

I studied with Ginastera I could not make a fugue not even working as a mule.

Between 1971 and 1972 he focused on nonet “Conjunto 9”. In this respect, Piazzolla stated: “The Nonet was like a big dream, the chamber group I always wanted to have.”<sup>217</sup> Between 1974 and 1978 he worked in Europe (mainly in Italy), where most of his production included great bandoneon solos with instrumental accompaniment due to the joint work with session musicians who did not come from the world of tango.<sup>218</sup>

In 1978 he founded the second quintet, which he would dissolve ten years later in 1988. By then, Piazzolla was renowned worldwide, and had successfully toured in Europe, the United States and Japan. During those years he wrote a lot of music related to Western art music again: *Concierto para bandoneón y orquesta, suite Punta del Este, Tres tangos para bandoneón y orquesta, Concierto para bandoneón, guitarra y orquesta*, and *Cinco sensaciones de tango*.

Piazzolla was an extremely gifted bandoneonist, with a clear diction in articulated passages and virtuosic phrasing in melodic passages. His main influences aside from Aníbal Troilo, were Pedro Laurenz and Pedro Maffia (to whom he dedicated *Pedro y Pedro*, 1981). Piazzolla changed the usual way of playing the bandoneon by playing standing, and thus was able to achieve different kinds of sonorities. According to bandoneonist Víctor Villena, the weight with which the two keyboards of the bandoneon fall to both sides when standing up greatly influences the resulting sound and the way of playing.<sup>219</sup> Piazzolla puts it as follows:

For many years I played it [the bandoneon] sitting down, like most of my colleagues, until I became a soloist. Then I felt the need to look for a different position, more in line with my personality. Sitting down I felt tied down. I stood up, nailed the left leg to the floor, and put the instrument over the right one. Since then I have played with my guts over the *fueye*. Sometimes I even think we dance together, the bandoneon and me.<sup>220</sup>

## Analysis of works

In order to determine the structural characteristics of his language, I have analyzed four pieces composed by Piazzolla. The pieces chosen for this purpose are:

- *Milonga del ángel*
- *Tres minutos con la realidad*
- *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*
- *Adiós Nonino*.

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<sup>217</sup> Gorín, Natalio: *Astor Piazzolla: a memoir*, p. 50. Original in English.

<sup>218</sup> García Brunelli, Omar: “La obra de Astor Piazzolla y su relación con el tango como especie de música popular urbana”; *Revista del Instituto de Investigación Musicológica “Carlos Vega”*, N. 12 (1992), p. 215.

<sup>219</sup> Personal interview, February 2014.

<sup>220</sup> Gorín, Natalio: *Astor Piazzolla: a memoir*, p. 142. Original in English.

### 3.2 Milonga del ángel

Music and arrangement by Astor Piazzolla, 1965.

In this analysis I use the version recorded by “Quinteto Tango Nuevo” on the album “Live – Lugano 13 Ottobre 1983”, 1992, for the record company Ermitage, Italy. Astor Piazzolla, bandoneon; Fernando Suárez Paz, violin; Pablo Ziegler, piano; Oscar López Ruiz, guitar and Héctor Console, double bass.

Duration: 6'41"

*Milonga del ángel* presents many innovative features, the central one being the treatment of the *milonga campera*<sup>221</sup> rhythm, which Piazzolla used not only for the accompaniment but also for some of the melodies. This rhythm – derived from Argentinian *folklore* – is also found in other pieces, such as the famous *Milonga triste* (1936) by Sebastián Piana, which Piazzolla himself recorded with his quintet (“Nuestro Tiempo”, 1962) and in a bandoneon duet playing both parts (recorded in 1970, featured on the album “Astor Piazzolla 1943-1982”, 1982). In many tangos, the *milonga campera* rhythm is used in the accompaniment during slow sections. *Retrato de Julio Ahumada* by Leopoldo Federico, *Orlando Goñi* by Alfredo Gobbi in the version performed by Sexteto Mayor and *Chumbicha* by Ernesto Baffa, recorded by Troilo’s orchestra, all demonstrate this typical use. In addition, in *Aquellos tangos camperos* by the famous duo Salgán-De Lío this rhythm is presented in several variations, and in *Encuentro* by Gustavo Beytelmann (analyzed in the next chapter), the *milonga campera* accompaniment is used to highlight the recapitulation of the main theme. Although Salgán claims to have been the first to use the *milonga campera* rhythm with an *orquesta típica*<sup>222</sup>, Piazzolla is the one who systematized its use in many pieces.<sup>223</sup> He definitively integrated it into tango with a new formula that combines and alternates between elements from the two traditional *milongas*: *campera* and *ciudadana*. From the *milonga campera*, he took the slow tempo, the *bordoneo*<sup>224</sup>, the 3-3-2 meter and the melancholic character. From the *milonga ciudadana*, he used the rhythmical pattern (though rewritten in 4/4 and accented on beats 1 and 3) and the melodic profile of the bass line, while the harmonic part that completes the rhythmical base is presented in various ways that are also derived from the tradition. According to Gustavo Beytelmann, the relationship between Piazzolla and composer Alberto Ginastera may have influenced Piazzolla’s use of this vernacular rhythm. In any case, *Milonga del ángel* exemplifies the possibilities for transformation and stylization of tango rhythms in general and of *milonga* in particular.

Figure 1 shows (in B-minor) the bass line according to the pattern introduced by Piazzolla (a) and the traditional patterns from which it is derived (b and c). The accents between parentheses illustrate the usual way of playing these patterns, even

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<sup>221</sup> See Glossary.

<sup>222</sup> Ursini, Sonia: *Horacio Salgán. La supervivencia de un artista en el tiempo*; Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 1993, p. 171.

<sup>223</sup> Other examples of similarly composed slow milongas by Piazzolla include *Oblivion* and *Romance del diablo*. In other cases, the same accompanimental patterns were used in the slow sections of rhythmical tangos.

<sup>224</sup> In this work, *bordoneo* means both the bass line as well as the arpeggiated harmony that completes the rhythmical base.

when those accents are not notated: it is an implicit feature of interpretation that tango musicians know well.

- a) Pattern systematized by Piazzolla
- b) Typical pattern of *milonga ciudadana* (in 2/4). The position of the accent is meant to create a syncopation and destabilize the steady beat.
- c) Typical pattern of *milonga campera* (with half-step appoggiatura  $\hat{6} - \hat{5}$ )

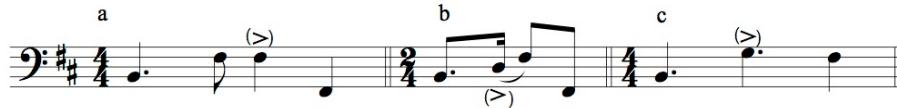


Figure 1: *milonga* patterns

The first pattern (a) is the one at the beginning of *Milonga del ángel*, based on the *milonga ciudadana* rhythm (b) but, as noted earlier, in a much slower tempo. Another important difference between patterns a and b is the pitch of their second note. Piazzolla simplifies the profile of the bass line by using only two pitches of the scale:  $\hat{1}$  (B) and  $\hat{5}$  (F#), avoiding the use of  $\hat{3}$  (D) as would be typical in a *milonga ciudadana*. Piazzolla instead reserves this note for the melody, which is based on a repeating D. In other moments of the piece with this rhythmical pattern he uses the repetition of a single pitch, only now as a pedal point. The displaced accent shows another strong discrepancy between patterns a and b. Although they are based on a marcato in 2<sup>225</sup>, in Piazzolla's pattern the accent falls on the third beat. In contrast, with the *milonga ciudadana* pattern, the accent is usually played on the sixteenth-note before the beat 3 in order to emphasize the syncopation, which is articulated by means of a tie<sup>226</sup> as shown in Figure 1. From pattern c, Piazzolla took the slow tempo, the character and the typical half-step appoggiatura ( $\hat{6} - \hat{5}$  in tonic harmony,  $\hat{9} - \hat{8}$  in dominant). The traditional patterns, already analyzed in related literature (Salgán, 2001; Peralta, 2008; Gallo, 2011), will be studied below on a case-by-case basis in relation to their use in *Milonga del ángel*.

The main themes in *Milonga del ángel* are generally played by the bandoneon (Fig. 2). The centrality of the bandoneon in Piazzolla's pieces could be compared to that of the piano in Salgán's works. Indeed, Piazzolla takes the idea of a concertante instrument even further and becomes the unequivocal main soloist of his ensemble. This was not a common practice in traditional tango ensembles. The melodic lines in the piece consist of a few notes usually played with the bandoneon's right hand in a restricted tessitura. The striking beauty of this piece is granted by the musicians' performance and the way in which Piazzolla and Suárez Paz phrased their solos. As usual in tango, the bass maintains the steady beat, which allows the rest of the instruments to phrase freely. In addition to the phrased solos, the accompanimental countermelodies are phrased as well, generating different overlapping phrasings, a core feature of this "ensemble of soloists" (a notion already analyzed in Salgán's

<sup>225</sup> Considering pattern b with its four eighth-notes, of which the first and third are the main beats.

<sup>226</sup> The tie is not always notated. Tango musicians will perform this way even when a tie is not written into the score.

chapter). In other ensembles, phrasing is used exclusively by the soloist or the instrumental section playing the theme (as in many *orquestas típicas*).

Regarding the harmonic features in *Milonga del ángel*, modulations are also used in an innovative manner. There are many more modulations than is typical in tango, and they never move to parallel, relative or closely-related tonalities. The first three tonalities of the piece – B-minor, C-minor and C#-minor – also establish an ascending motion that compensates for the insistent, descending motion of the theme (D, C#, B). This technique of creating contrary motion between the theme's profile and the sequence of tonalities is also found in the above-mentioned piece *Encuentro*, by Gustavo Beytelmann.

Another main trait of Piazzolla's style is the increased number of phrases and sections, as well as the extended duration of the solos. This results in a piece that lasts 6'41'', more than twice the length of a standard tango. Figure 2 shows the formal scheme of the piece and its main characteristics. The following analysis is based on the 1983 live recording and the score for quintet published by Editorial Lagos (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1968).

Section	Intro	A		A'		Bridge	B	
Sub-sect.	-	<b>a1</b>		<b>a2</b>		<b>a1'</b>	<b>a2'</b>	
Bar #'s	1-12	13-20		21-28		29-36	37-44	
Qty.	8+4	8		8		8	8+2	
Melody	piano	bandoneon				pno-vl-bnd	violin	
Accomp.	<i>milonga</i>			sync-mil	<i>milonga</i>			
Remarks	no bnd.	no piano		faster	tempo 1	no theme	-	no bnd.
Tonality	B-minor						C-minor	

Section	A''				A'''		Coda
Sub-sect.	<b>a1''</b>	<b>a2''</b>	<b>a3</b>	<b>a1'''</b>	<b>a2'''</b>		-
Bar #'s	73-79	80-89	90-96	97-104	105-109		110-113
Qty.	8	8+2	7	8	5		4
Melody	bandoneon				(guit.)		
Accomp.	<i>milonga</i>				sync-mil	en 2	
Remarks	no piano		<i>f</i>	-	-		
Tonality	C#-minor		F-minor				

Figure 2: formal scheme of *Milonga del ángel*

### Introduction (from bar 1 to bar 12), [00:00-00:40]

The innovative features of the piece are demonstrated from the first bar. As mentioned earlier, the bass plays pattern a in Fig. 1, which remains unchanged for sixteen bars – the entire introduction and the first four bars of section A – thus blurring the formal segmentation. The bass line also contrasts with the typical harmony for this pattern, which usually alternates between tonic and dominant, with structures such as the following:

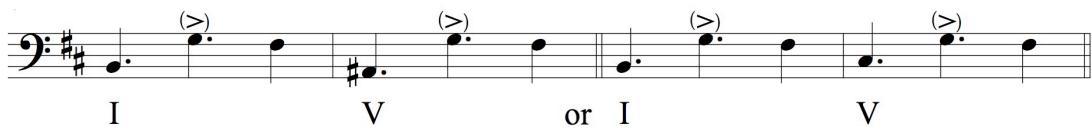


Figure 3: typical patterns of *milonga campera*

Over this rhythmical bass line, Piazzolla introduces the typical two-hands piano solo<sup>227</sup>, in this case two octaves apart and with unusual rhythmical and melodic features. Piazzolla derives the main line's melodic profile from the *milonga* bass line (Fig. 1, patterns a and c; Fig. 3, second pattern), and states the melody using repeated whole notes that are ornamented with acciaccaturas. The resulting melody is more typical of the bandoneon than of the piano. Figure 4 shows the bass line on the first staff, and below, the pitches derived from it which create the piano melody in the introduction.

Figure 4: construction of the melodic line in the introduction [00:00-00:40], with indication of the above-mentioned features

The melancholic mood which is so characteristic for the *milonga campera* is reinforced by the unchanging instrumentation and *p* dynamics as well as by the static

<sup>227</sup> See Glossary.

nature of all of the textural layers (including the harmonic background played by the electric guitar and violin, and the ostinato bass line). This introduction consists of an eight-bar theme, followed by a four-bar extension that is a rhythmical augmentation of the first two bars (indicated in Fig. 4). In the extension (bars 9-12), the guitar begins the syncopated countermelody of section A, softening the transition. Like the melodic line in the piano part, the guitar countermelody is also derived from the *milonga campera*'s *bordoneo*. Figure 5 shows one of the traditional patterns of *milonga campera* with a harmonic accompaniment featuring *bordoneo*. Figure 6 shows this pattern as re-created by Piazzolla.

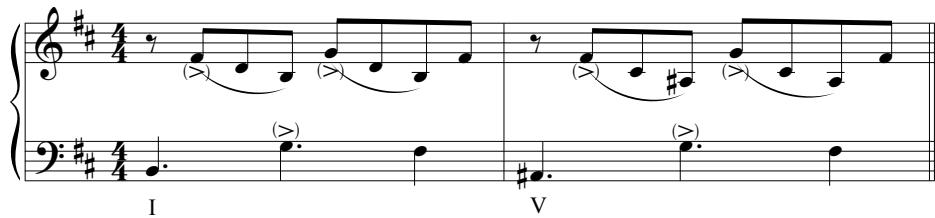


Figure 5: typical pattern of *milonga campera*



Figure 6: Piazzolla's pattern

The timbre of the electric guitar constituted another innovation in the tango world. In some sections of this piece, its use could be related to the role given to the amplified guitar in Salgán's quintet: that of providing harmonic fills and countermelodies that contrast rhythmically and accentually with the rhythmical base. In Piazzolla's compositions, however, in general the instrument either performs soloistically or in unison with the countermelody or rhythmical base.

Finally, sections **A** and **B** are divided into regular eight-bar phrases to which two bars are systematically added (indicated in Fig. 2 as 8 + 2) when they precede the introduction of a new tonality. Sections are longer as they have more phrases than is usual in a traditional tango. Yet, Piazzolla's creation of themes in these phrases does not differ significantly from the construction through regular motives that is typical of traditional tango.

#### Section A (from bar 13 to bar 28), [00:40-01:33]

The theme of section **A** is presented in a long bandoneon solo encompassing four consecutive phrases in antecedent-consequent pairs (**a1**, **a2** and **a1'**, **a2'**). This is completely unusual in the language of tango that, as noted in previous chapters, is

based on frequent contrasts in instrumentation, rhythm, articulation and character. In the examples below, the difference between the score and Piazzolla's performance is striking. As usual in the phrased solos, the long notes of the melody – written on the downbeat – are rarely aligned with the first beat of each bar in performance, while the ornamentation used differs from the score as well as from recording to recording. Piazzolla establishes this performative technique from the very first note of the theme, by entering a bar earlier than in the score, with *pp* dynamics and, by means of a crescendo, coming to the foreground in the next bar (bar 13) and establishing his soloistic role.

**a1** (from bar 13 to bar 20), [00:40-01:06]

The main theme encompasses two phrases (**a1** and **a2**, Fig. 7). The first phrase **a1** is structured as follows:

- First semi-phrase (bars 13-16): Piazzolla plays three consecutive one-bar motives on  $\hat{3}$  (D), each time with a changing upbeat figure based on the traditional half-step lower neighbor and ornaments using  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ ; the semi-phrase concludes on  $\hat{5}$ .
- Second semi-phrase (bars 17-20): the same motive is presented a minor third lower while the piece briefly modulates to the relative tonality D-major. In bar 19, the direction of the line is inverted and the rhythm is retrograded, though it again concludes on  $\hat{5}$ .

**a2** (from bar 21 to bar 28), [01:06-01:33]

The first two bars (bars 21-22) in this second phrase could be derived from the *milonga campera*'s bass line (indicated with ovals in Fig. 7). Following these are variations of the one-bar motive, again on  $\hat{3}$  (D) as in **a1**, though now with several ornaments using  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ . This section ends with another variation of the initial *bordoneo*.

Figure 7: theme of the bandoneon, section A, bars 13-28 [00:40-01:33], with indication of the above-mentioned features

The accompaniment presents diverse *bordoneos* on the guitar – maintaining the original connection between the instrument and the *milonga campera* rhythm – while the violin plays a lyrical countermelody of long notes featuring mainly descending stepwise motion, like the theme. The absence of the piano in most of this first section contributes to its intimate character. Another relevant feature of the accompaniment is the polyrhythm in bars 27-28, used as a contrasting element to demarcate the end of section **A** and as a connecting passage to **A'**. As indicated in Fig. 8, three different rhythmical patterns are superimposed, creating a polyrhythm:

- 1) 3+3+3+3+3<sup>228</sup>. This two-bar motive in which the rhythmical structure remains unaligned with the meter is used frequently in Piazzolla's music, as we will see in other analyses in this chapter
- 2) in 2 (half-notes), emphasizing accentuation in the bass line
- 3) *milonga* rhythm

This is the first time the piano plays in section **A**, which further reinforces the entrance of section **A'** while creating a rhythmical and accentual contrast with the bass line. As with the connection made by the guitar between the introduction and the beginning of section **A**, the entrance of the piano in the last two bars of this section articulates formal segmentation in a similar way.

Figure 8: polyrhythm, end of **A**, bars 27-28, [01:27-01:33], with indication of the above-mentioned features

### **A'** (from bar 29 to bar 44), [01:33-02:22]

The separation from section **A** is emphasized by means of a homorhythmical accompaniment in the first four bars of section **A'**, which contrast with the polyrhythm of the previous segment. These four bars (and their reoccurrence in bars 105-106) present another variation of the *milonga ciudadana* rhythm. Figure 9

<sup>228</sup> This is a variation of the 3-3-2 rhythm. In this case, even though accents are not written out, they are always played on the first eighth note of every group of 3.

exemplifies the original rhythmical pattern and Figure 10 shows the pattern that Piazzolla derived from it, taking only the upper line of Figure 9 and displacing the accent to eighth-notes 4 and 8 of each bar.



Figure 9: *milonga ciudadana* original pattern<sup>229</sup>

Figure 10: Piazzolla's pattern, bar 29 [01:33-01:37]

In section A', the phrases of section A are restated with slight variations.

**a1'** (from bar 29 to bar 36), [01:33-01:56]: this phrase has a slightly faster tempo, a more articulated accompaniment, and an increase in dynamics, tessitura and instrumental density. The bandoneon emphasizes the ornaments of the theme and the violin plays the countermelody of the previous section, now three octaves higher and with variations.

**a2'** (from bar 37 to bar 44), [01:56-02:22]: the initial tempo resumes and **a2** is recapitulated with some variations.

<sup>229</sup> As the model exemplified by Peralta: *La orquesta típica*; Buenos Aires: author, 2008, pp. 215-216.

In section A', the rhythmical base plays new patterns based on the slow *milonga* (Fig. 11).

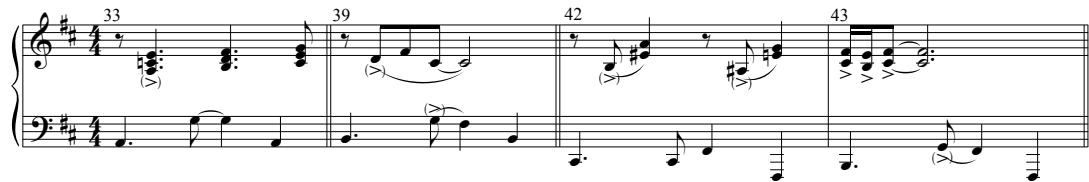


Figure 11: milonga patterns used in A'

### Bridge (from bar 45 to bar 54), [02:22-02:54]

In order to create the typical formal contrast, Piazzolla places a bridge between sections A and B. Although the bridge maintains the tempo and character of the previous sections, it is distinctive because it presents the most typical pattern of *milonga campera* in two complementary textural layers: in one layer, the double bass and the electric guitar perform the bass motive in unison; in the other, the piano and the bandoneon left hand (in the only segment that uses the low register) play the accompanimental *bordoneo* that completes the harmony (Fig. 12). In this way, Piazzolla orchestrates the original guitar pattern of *milonga campera* (Fig. 13, variation of the pattern in Fig. 5). In the absence of a theme, this accompanimental *bordoneo* is perceived as the main textural layer – yet another innovation – and contrasts with its original role of accompanying verses and melodies. This use of accompanimental motives and ostinatos as a main textural layer is another trait of Piazzolla's music. Finally, the formal structure of the bridge, featuring five repetitions of its main motive, represents another contrast with the previous phrases. This motive is used in two-bar ostinatos that move through various transpositions in order to modulate to C-minor, the tonality of section B.

bass line

accompanying 'bordoneo'

Figure 12: Bridge, bars 45-46 [02:22-02:29], with indication of the above-mentioned features



Figure 13: typical original guitar pattern

**Section B** (from bar 55 to bar 72), [02:54-03:56]

As the bridge ends, a phrased solo in the violin begins, structured in two phrases (antecedent-consequent): **b1** and **b2** (Fig. 14).

**b1** (from bar 55 to bar 62), [02:54-03:22]: this phrase is based on a two-bar motive that repeats with slight variations over three successively descending octaves. It is made up of materials similar to those of the bandoneon solo in section A, including neighbor tones, seconds and thirds, and the prevailing descending motion. The final segment (indicated in Fig. 14 with a dashed line) functions as a connecting passage that fills the registral gap and leads to the second phrase **b2**.

Figure 14: theme of the violin in section B (bars 55-72), [02:54-03:56], with indication of the above-mentioned features

**b2** (from bar 63 to bar 72), [03:22-03:56]: in this phrase the violin continues the melody while the bandoneon stops playing in order to later highlight the return of theme A in the following section. The accompaniment continues the slow *milonga* rhythm, presented again in a variety of combinations. This phrase concludes with the typical ascending sixths of the milonga *bordoneo* (as seen in Figs. 1, 3, 5, 7 and 12), here featuring unusual attacks on the downbeat. As part of the phrasing used by Suárez Paz to state the theme, he adds glissandos, contributing to the overall lyricism of the piece. These glissandos are frequently used in the phrased violin melodies in Piazzolla's pieces, and are also derived from the tango tradition.

In addition to the already exemplified patterns, in section **B** the following are featured:



Figure 15: *milonga* patterns in section **B**

Section **A''** (from bar 73 to bar 96), [03:56-05:22]

This section functions as a recapitulation of section **A**, though now in a new tonality (C#-minor) and lasting three phrases rather than two. The bandoneon again plays the theme (**a1''**, bars 73-79) with slight variations in phrasing and ornamentation compared to **a1**. The orchestration in this phrase presents an interesting feature aimed at smoothly connecting sections **B** and **A''** (Fig. 16). Piazzolla, who does not play in the previous phrase, enters with the new theme two bars before this section. Thus, the last note of the violin solo in the previous segment (Eb,  $\hat{3}$  of C-minor) aligns with the first note of the bandoneon, which leads to the first note of the theme in **A''** (E,  $\hat{3}$  of C#-minor). The piano is again absent (as in **A**), and the guitar phrases its *bordoneos* more than in the preceding sections. **a2''** (bars 80-89) starts as in **a2**, but then modifies the melodic profile to lead to **a3** (bars 90-96), which forms an extension of the theme that emphasizes and demarcates the following presentation of section **A'''**.

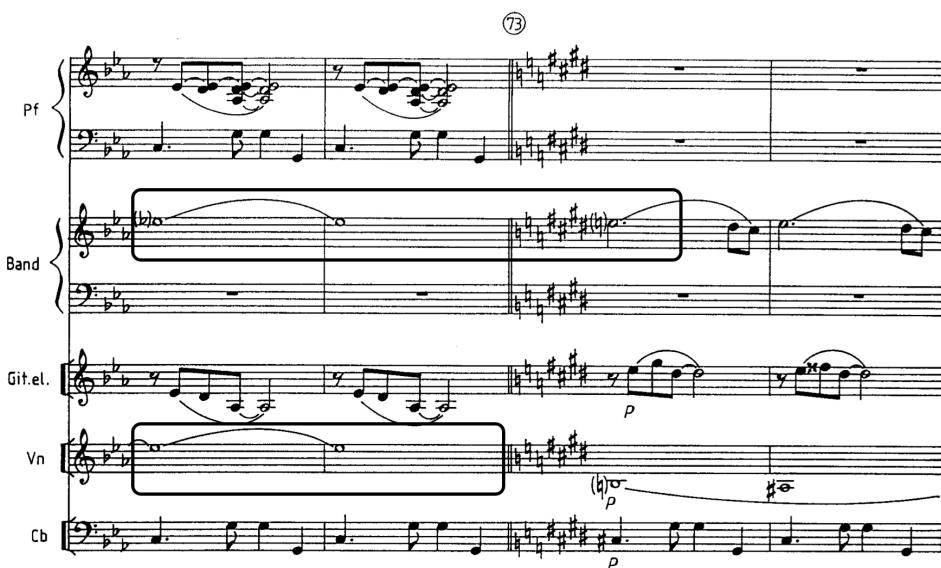


Figure 16: connection between sections **B** and **A''** (bars 71-74), [03:49-04:05], with indication of the above-mentioned features

Section A''' (from bar 97 to bar 109), [05:22-05:59]

This section presents another unusual modulation, now from C#-minor to F-minor, and is separated from the previous section by the interruption of the rhythmical base in bar 96 (the last of A''). It presents a final variation of **a1** and **a2**.

**a1'''** (bars 97-104), [05:22-05:45]: in order to highlight the final occurrence of the bandoneon's theme (again varied in phrasing and ornamentation), registral, textural and dynamic aspects are altered (Fig. 17). The bandoneon uses its highest register (here starting the phrase on an A5), and the violin plays harmonics, also using its highest register yet. The rhythmical base is reinforced by typical tango *arrastres* in all of the bars, thickened by parallel fifths in the piano. The piano and guitar chords fill the registral gap between the high register (bandoneon and violin) and the low register (*arrastres*). Here, the moment of the widest tessitura and greatest registral density of the piece has been reached, further emphasized by *f* dynamics. The last bars feature a rubato *arrebatado* that leads to **a2'''**.

Figure 17: **a'''**, bars 97-98, [05:22-05:30],  
with indication of fifths and *arrastres*

**a2'''** (bars 105-109, Fig. 18), [05:45-06:01]: this phrase is heavily varied and compressed in relation to **a2**. It has five bars instead of eight, which are divided into two brief segments of contrasting accompaniment. The first segment features a faster tempo, while the latter returns to the general slow tempo of the piece. The rhythmical patterns used derive from parts of the *milonga* rhythm. In Fig. 18, a rectangle in the first staff (indicated with the letter a) shows the rhythm already seen in **a'** (section A'), from which Piazzolla derived the model indicated with the letter c in the quintet's score below. The descending motion of the bass (indicated with descending arrows) also comes from pattern a in Fig. 1. The rhythms in bars 107-108 would be derived from pattern b: its first half is repeated to generate bar 107 (indicated by a rectangle with dashed lines) and its second half is augmented to generate bar 108 (indicated with ovals).

The musical score shows five staves: Piano (Pf), Bandoneon (Band), Electric Guitar (Git. el.), Violin (Vn), and Cello (Cb). A large bracket labeled 'Pf' covers the first two staves. A bracket labeled 'Band' covers the Bandoneon, Electric Guitar, Violin, and Cello staves. Annotations are as follows:

- a**: A box highlights a sixteenth-note pattern in the Pf staff.
- b**: A box highlights a sixteenth-note pattern in the Guit. staff, with a circled note and a dashed line indicating a continuation.
- c**: A box highlights a sixteenth-note pattern in the Pf staff, with a circled note and a dashed line indicating a continuation. The measure number '105' is above the box.

Figure 18: **b”**, bars 105-108, [05:46-05:56], with indication of the above-mentioned features

### Coda (from bar 110 to bar 113), [06:01-06:41]

The bandoneon links **A”** to the coda by means of a connecting passage that is not written out in the score, but is heard on the recording. The guitar plays ascending arpeggios that are typical of the *bordoneo* in a slow *milonga* – though here played on the downbeat – while the rest of the instruments play a marcato in 2 half-notes to emphasize the laid-back rubato that leads to the end of the piece (Fig. 19).

The musical score shows five staves: Piano (Pf), Bandoneon (Band), Electric Guitar (Git. el.), Violin (Vn), and Cello (Cb). A large bracket labeled 'Pf' covers the first two staves. A bracket labeled 'Band' covers the Bandoneon, Electric Guitar, Violin, and Cello staves. The Git. el. staff has a box highlighting an arpeggio pattern. The Cb staff has a circled note on the downbeat.

Figure 19: **Coda**, bars 110-113, [06:01-06:41], with indication of downbeat sixths in the guitar



### 3.3 *Tres minutos con la realidad*

Music and arrangement by Astor Piazzolla (1957)

Recorded on the album “Tango en Hi-Fi” in 1957 for the record company Music Hall, Argentina. Astor Piazzolla, bandoneon; Elvino Vardaro, violin; Jaime Gosis, piano; José Bragato, violoncello and Juan Vasallo, double bass.

Duration: 3'07"

The title of *Tres minutos con la realidad* refers to the three-minute average duration of a tango. In this piece, Piazzolla maintains some characteristics of traditional tango – the **A-B-A'**-Coda form and the typical contrast between sections – while asserting some features of his own language, such as the use of ostinatos and the marcato in 3-3-2. Piazzolla himself described the piece as “a *toccata* in tango rhythm”.<sup>230</sup> He composed it in about four hours, just after hearing Bartók’s *Second Violin Concerto* for the first time. The piece is actually marked by Bartokian effects, as well as rhythmical accents reminiscent of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*. In her essay “La poética referencial de Astor Piazzolla”<sup>231</sup>, musicologist Malena Kuss states that the most innovative aspect of this tango is the use of the octatonic scale in section **A**, which renders the piece tonally ambiguous, a concept alien to the tango tradition.<sup>232</sup>

The frequent use of minor thirds in the ostinato as well as its transpositions (E; G; Bb) may derive from the octatonic scale. In Kuss’s opinion, the whole-tone scale, which could be derived from the bass line in *Tres minutos con la realidad*, may also be related to the octatonic scale, due to the large number of tritones present in both scales (octatonic and whole-tone). However, the harmony of this section could also be considered the superimposition of minor tetrachords and altered chords. Through these non-traditional scales, Piazzolla creates a new structure for the typically diatonic tango bass line.

The analysis of *Tres minutos con la realidad* is based on the 1957 recording and on the score<sup>233</sup>, which was copied as usual by José Bragato<sup>234</sup>.

The piece is organized into phrases that are usually regular, eight bars long, and divisible into two semi-phrases, thus maintaining the basic formal structure of traditional tango. Figure 1 shows the formal scheme of the piece.

<sup>230</sup> Azzi, María Susana; Collier, Simon: *Le grand tango: the life and music of Astor Piazzolla*; New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000, p. 63.

<sup>231</sup> García Brunelli, Omar (editor): *Estudios sobre la obra de Astor Piazzolla*; Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical Ediciones, 2008, p. 57.

<sup>232</sup> Piazzolla may have been inspired by the 1952 *Sonata* for piano of his teacher Alberto Ginastera, which has similar features. In her essay, Kuss presents a comparative analysis of Ginastera’s sonata and Piazzolla’s tango, detailing outstanding analogies between them.

<sup>233</sup> The score shown in the figures corresponds to a version for a larger ensemble. The quintet’s orchestration is the same, but without the harp, second violin, viola or violoncello parts.

<sup>234</sup> José Bragato is a violoncellist, pianist, arranger and composer (b. 1915). He was a member of Piazzolla’s “Octeto Buenos Aires” and the one who copied and transcribed most of Piazzolla’s pieces.

Section	A					
Phrases	a1	a2	a3	a4	a5	a6
Bar #'s	1-8	9-16	17-25	26-33	34-41	42-52
Qty. bars	8	8	8+1	8	8	8+3
Harmony	Altered/Octatonic (Kuss)					
Main	based on ostinatos					

Section	B		A'				Coda
Phrases	b1	b2	a7	a8	a9	a10	-
Bar #'s	53-60	61-67	69-76	77-84	85-92	93-98	99-105
Qty.	8	7	8	8	8	6	7
Harmony	Tonal		Altered/Octatonic (Kuss)				
Main	strings' melody + ostinatos		piano solo + ostinatos			ostinatos	mixed

Figure 1: formal scheme of *Tres minutos con la realidad*

### Section A (from bar 1 to bar 52), [00:00-01:30]

This first section is longer than usual for a tango, and considerably longer than the following section **B**. Although the typical contrast between sections **A** and **B** is maintained, this level of disproportion between their durations is unusual in traditional tango. It contains six phrases that are divided into two groups, each of them three phrases long. *Tres minutos* could be considered a rhythmical tango with a brief contrasting section in the middle that prevents monotony and highlights the outer sections.

**a1** (from bar 1 to bar 8), [00:00-00:14]: in this phrase Piazzolla presents the motives of both the theme and the bass, which he will use in all the subsequent phrases, through variation and transposition. The two-bar thematic motive of the first semi-phrase (beginning with an E, bars 1-4) is built from a minor third and features the half-step appoggiaturas and stepwise motion typical of tango melodies, with a 3-3-2 rhythm in the first bar and a syncopated rhythm in the second. According to Andrea Marsili<sup>235</sup>, throughout section **A**, this opening two-bar motive is varied as follows (Fig. 2):

<sup>235</sup> Marsili, Andrea: *Le langage musical et instrumental du tango rioplatense. Codes et convencionnalismes*; Stuttgart: Abrazos, 2014, pp. 171-172.

Thème (a)

Transposition du thème («  $a^1$  »)

Première variation («  $a^2$  »)

Deuxième variation (b)

Troisième variation («  $b^1$  »)

Quatrième variation (c)

Cinquième variation (d)

Sixième variation («  $d'$  »)

Septième variation (e)

Huitième variation (f)

Neuvième variation (f)

Point

Figure 2: variations on the opening two-bar motive according to Marsili, bars 1-52

The rhythmical and accentual pattern of the main textural layer in **a1** (bandoneon and strings) is reinforced by the harmonic accompaniment (chords in the right hand of the

piano). The two-bar motive in the bass line (double bass and left hand of the piano) presents a marcato in 4<sup>236</sup> with typical tango ornaments, contrasting with the rhythm in the main textural layer.<sup>237</sup> This technique is typical of Piazzolla's works: the bass line contains four beats per measure, strongly expressing the meter and contrasting with the 3-3-2 pattern. According to musicologist Edgardo Rodríguez, the systematic use of this superimposition of equivalent meters (4/4 and 3-3-2/8) is one of the major contributions of Piazzolla's compositional technique (Fig. 3).

The musical score for 'Banda' by Piazzolla is shown in two systems of four measures each. The instrumentation includes Double Bass, Piano, Bandoneón, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The first system (measures 1-2) features a bass line with eighth-note patterns labeled 'ostinato' and 'syncopated'. The piano part has a 'marcato in 4' pattern. The second system (measures 3-4) features a bass line with a '3-3-2 in 4' pattern, indicated by an oval. The piano part continues with a 'marcato in 4' pattern. The score is in 4/8 time, with various dynamics and performance instructions like 'p' (pianissimo) and 'ff' (fortissimo).

Figure 3: bars 1-2 [00:00-00:04],  
with indication of the above-mentioned features

<sup>236</sup> This piece is notated in a 4/8 meter instead than in the usual 4/4. Still, the names of the accompanying models are maintained, marcato in 4 here being made of four eighth-notes.

<sup>237</sup> As usual, the guitar featured in Bragato's score and in many recordings of this piece plays filling and accompanimental passages, sometimes aligning with and sometimes counteracting the rhythmical and accentual patterns of the rest of the instruments.

In the second semi-phrase (bars 5-8) of **a1**, all of the textural layers are transposed a minor third higher and the motive begins with a G (Fig. 4).

The musical score for bars 5-6 of **a1** is shown on five staves. The top staff is for the Bandoneon. The second staff is for the Piano, with a box highlighting a '3-3-2 syncopated' pattern. The third staff is for Arias. The fourth staff is for Guitars and Double Bass. The bottom staff is for Cello. The piano part also features '3-3-2 in 4' and 'marcato in 4' patterns. Ostinato patterns are indicated in the piano and cello staves.

Figure 4: bars 5-6 [00:07-00:11],  
with indication of the above-mentioned features

**a2** (from bar 9 to bar 16), [00:14:-00:28]: this phrase is divided into three fragments of 3, 3, and 2 bars in length respectively, which is an instance of Piazzolla's famous 3-3-2 rhythm being used on a larger level. In the first fragment (bars 9-11), there is a last transposition, again a minor third higher, and the motive thus begins with a Bb. It is also slightly varied: the first eighth-note is subdivided into four thirty-second notes, and the left hand of the bandoneon joins in to reinforce the piano chords (Fig. 5). Thus ends a gradual process that connects the three transpositions of the motive through an increase in both instrumental density (as the left hand of the piano joins in bar 9) and dynamics (with a *p-mf-f* crescendo respectively), and through the expansion of the tessitura (the last transposition creates the greatest registral distance between the melody and the bass).

Figure 5: bars 9-10 [00:14-00:18],  
with indication of the above-mentioned features

The second fragment of **a2** (bars 12-14) creates a contrast as the bandoneon plays a rapid solo (Fig. 6). The contrast is further emphasized by the homorhythymical accompaniment in the rest of the instruments, even including the bass, which abandons its marcato in 4. The rhythm of this homorhythymical accompaniment is another salient feature of Piazzolla's music. It consists of a brief ostinato (in this case, a sixteenth-note followed by an eighth-note) that is repeated independently from the 4/4 meter until it has completed a number of whole bars, in general two (Fig. 6). Thus, two kinds of "deviations" are presented:

- Thematic: the bandoneon solo presents the necessary contrast that allows for the return of the ostinato in the following phrase.
- Metrical and accentual: bars 12-13 are perceived as a compound 6/8 meter that momentarily blurs the 4/4 meter and its simple subdivision. This procedure is used

again later in this piece and also in other pieces by Piazzolla (including *Michelangelo 70*, *Resurrección del ángel*, *Escualo* and *Revirado*), where it is written out with the sequence of bars 4/4 – 6/8.

In bars 14-15, materials from phrases **a1** and **a2** appear in combination (Fig. 6). The third and final fragment of **a2** (bars 15-16, Fig. 6), in which materials of the following phrase begin, signals this change of phrase through a reduction to *p* dynamics and with a double bass line that again contrasts with the main textural layer played in rhythmical unison by all of the other instruments.

**a3** (from bar 17 to bar 25), [00:28:-00:43]: the beginning of this phrase is distinguished by the rhythmical base resuming the marcato in 4 with its superimposed chords in 3-3-2 (Fig. 6), while the main textural layer continues with the motive started in bar 15, beginning with a C and, later, with a D. Considering the transpositions of the ostinato since the beginning of the piece, the resulting sequence is now E, G, Bb, C and D. This completes a cycle of transpositions containing the above-mentioned interval of a minor third as well as the whole tones of the bass line in contrary (now ascending) motion.

The motives in **a3** are no longer organized into two-bar segments as in the previous phrases, and here the bass alternates between a marcato in 4 and passages in free rhythm. **a3** ends with the first full tutti of the piece, creating a great contrast. In addition, a 2/8 bar is added at the end (bar 25), in which a descending glissando creates a stronger segmentation than that of previous phrases. This divides section A into two large blocks of three phrases each, the first consisting of **a1**, **a2** and **a3**, and the second of **a4**, **a5** and **a6**. The ternary structure of these two blocks differs from the more traditional binary construction in tango.

**a4**, **a5** and **a6** (from bar 26 to bar 52), [00:43:-01:30]: in these phrases the materials of **a1**, **a2** and **a3** are varied. They are more discontinuous as the motives are no longer organized into regular segments, and they feature frequent contrasts in instrumentation and register. In the first two sub-sections (**a4** and **a5**), the bass line contributes to this feeling of discontinuity by freely moving between a marcato in 4, marcato in 3-3-2 and in a variety of syncopated rhythms that sometimes join the main textural layer. The last phrase (**a6**, bars 42-52) has a number of characteristics that emphasize the end of section A. The piano plays a solo of percussive chords in the style of Bartók – very unusual in the world of tango – while the double bass accompanies with a marcato in 4 and the remaining instruments perform the ostinato motive in unison, in the medium-low register (Fig. 7). Then, three transitional bars are added (bars 50-52) to create a bigger formal division between sections A and B. In the first bar, the piano solo concludes; in the remaining two bars, the passage from bars 12-13 (perceived in 6/8) returns in a full tutti.

The two main divisions of section A (between **a3** and **a4**, and between A and B) are thus performed through a formal extension of 1 and 3 bars respectively, a technique already seen in the chapter on Pugliese.

12

Bandoneon

bnd. solo

(6/8)

Piano

Arpa

Guitarra Electrica

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

V.cello

Contrabajo

from a1

from a3

ostinato

3-3-2

in 4

a3 begins

ostinato

contrasting

in 4

rincipe 3116

Figure 6: end of a2, beginning of a3, bars 12-17 [00:19-00:30], with indication of the above-mentioned features

42

Bandoneon

ostinato

P. B. N ↑

Piano

'Barfók' solo

Arpa

ostinato

Guit. Electrica

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

V.cello

Contrabajo

in 4

Figure 7: beginning of a6, bars 42-43 [01:05-01:10], with indication of the above-mentioned features

Section **B** (from bar 53 to bar 67), [01:30-01:57]

Section **B** consists of two phrases (**b1** and **b2**) that are regular and similar, and that present the typical contrast with section **A** as they have a lyrical theme in the strings. Its tonal structure is based on an accompaniment that moves through the circle of fifths and is perceived immediately as contrasting to the initial use of harmony. This section links strongly to the language of tango. Throughout section **B**, the phrases are in well-defined tonalities (C-minor in **b1** and F-minor in **b2**). The main modulations of this piece are traditional and progress through the circle of fifths: G-octatonic for section **A**, to C-minor in **b1** and finally to F-minor in **b2**.

In section **B**, despite its distinctive, more melodic character, many elements of section **A**, such as the tempo, are maintained.

**b1** (from bar 53 to bar 60), [01:30-01:44]: in this phrase the bass line in 4 and the ostinatos from section **A** continue. Here the ostinato motive is again varied but remains based on the interval of a minor third, though without the appoggiaturas (Fig. 8). The left hand of the bandoneon again plays a rapid passage, although this time functioning as a countermelody (combining the chromaticism of bars 37 and 50 with diatonic passages). Due to the superimposition of the string section theme and the bandoneon line, this phrase is perceived as a polyphonic texture.

Figure 8: beginning of **b1**, bars 53-55 [01:30-01:35], with indication of the above-mentioned features

**b2** (from bar 61 to bar 67), [01:44-01:57], (Fig. 9): the bandoneon joins the theme of the string section, while the accompanimental marcato changes to 3-3-2 and only the

right hand of the piano maintains the ostinatos from the previous phrases. In **b2**, the main textural layer (bandoneon and strings) becomes more prominent and returns to the typical texture of melody and accompaniment.

To summarize, in section **B** the main materials of section **A** are maintained and reorganized. The ostinatos in section **B** – though orchestrated thinly – function as an accompanimental countermelody rather than as the main textural layer as in section **A**. This again demonstrates the exchange between background and foreground layers already seen in previous analyses in this dissertation. The greatest difference between sections is, thus, the new melody. This same concept occurs in other pieces by Piazzolla, such as *Fracanapa* (1963), where the contrasting section is achieved by superimposing a phrased violin solo over a ceaseless ostinato. In *Tres minutos*, the added theme seems to be completely new. However, a more careful listening reveals that the string line is derived from the ostinato motive in section **A**. The first bars of the **B** theme<sup>238</sup> were probably formed through a variation on the second half of the initial ostinato motive (although with a major third) and the inversion of some of its intervals (Fig. 10). Then, the theme alternates between major thirds and minor thirds, both present in the two systems of pitch organization used in this piece (octatonic and tonal), which creates a sense of coherence.

Figure 9: beginning of **b2**, bars 61-62 [01:44-01:48], with indication of the above-mentioned features

<sup>238</sup> In the above-mentioned essay, Malena Kuss claims that this theme is similar to that of *Adiós Nonino*, also by Piazzolla, analyzed later in this chapter.

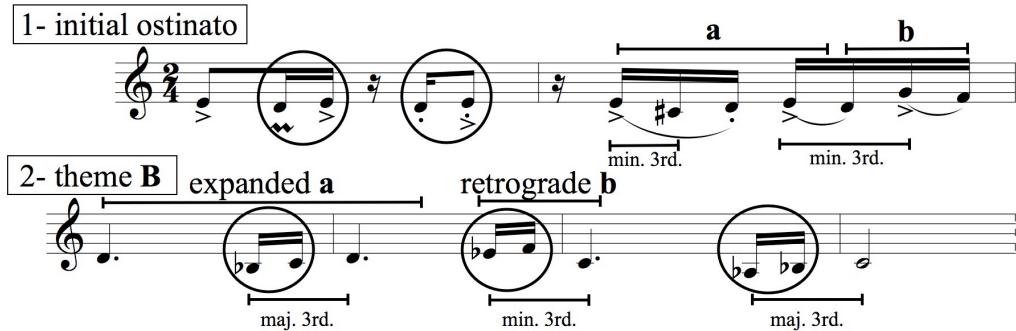


Figure 10: Thematic relations between section **A** (bars 1-2) and section **B** (bars 53-56)

Lastly, sections **A** and **B** together form eight phrases that are divided into three groups as follows: 3-3-2. Thus, Piazzolla transferred the rhythmical structure of his most characteristic marcato not only to melodic lines, but even to the formal organization of this piece at both the phrase (**a2**) and the section level (**A** and **B**). This also demonstrates a deviation from the binary structures used in traditional tango, such as simple meter, two semi-phrases within a phrase, two phrases within a section and two sections within a piece.

#### Section **A'** (from bar 69 to bar 98), [01:57-02:57]

Section **A'** is organized into four phrases – three are eight bars in length (piano solo) and one is six bars in length – in which materials of section **A** are varied. This recapitulation expands upon the two-hands piano solo in octaves, typical of tango, transforming it into a virtuoso solo that is unusual for the genre. It is based on fast rhythms and utilizes the scales, arpeggios and chords in Bartók's style already present in previous phrases. The length of the solo is also atypical and, although fully notated, is more linked to improvised piano solos in jazz music. The last phrase of section **A'** (bars 93-98) leads to the end of the piece showing an alternation between the ostinatos and bars in a 2/8, which feature descending glissandos on the piano (the same technique used to divide **a3** and **a4**).

#### Coda (from bar 99 to bar 105), [02:41-03:07]

The coda (Fig. 11) presents all of the materials and techniques used in the piece: a full tutti performs a passage of ascending perfect fourths, followed by the sixteenth- plus eighth-note figure, and a descending glissando in the next bar. The accompaniment in the double bass and the guitar again imply a 6/8 meter that contrasts with the written 4/4. Finally, the piano resumes materials of the preceding solo and leads to the final descending glissando, an ending used by Piazzolla in many of his pieces (for example *Revirado*, *Decarísimo* and *La muerte del ángel*). This represents yet another deviation from traditional tango and its typical ending, which was already seen in the previous chapter.

99

**ostinato**

**fourths**

**'Bartók' solo**

**(6/8)**

Figure 11: **Coda** (bars 99-105),  
with indication of the above-mentioned features

### 3.4 *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*

Music and arrangement by Astor Piazzolla, 1967.

First recorded on “Astor Piazzolla y su quinteto”, 1967, for the record company Polydor, Uruguay. In this analysis I use the live version recorded in theatre Regina, Buenos Aires, on the LP “Piazzolla en el Regina”, 1970, for the record company RCA Victor, Argentina. Astor Piazzolla, bandoneon; Osvaldo Manzi, piano; Antonio Agri, violin; Kicho Díaz, double bass and Cacho Tirao, guitar.

Duration: 7'45"

*Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi* is a tribute to the violinist and composer Alfredo Gobbi (1912-1965), whose style inspired many of the best performers and composers of tango: Salgán, Pugliese, Troilo and Piazzolla himself. Piazzolla remembers Gobbi as follows:

He played the piano using three fingers and produced beautiful sounds, such as a waltz he had dedicated to me. I once suffered a terrible misfortune. One day Alfredo came to my home and I was not there. He slid the score of that waltz under my door, simply written in pencil. When I found it I devoted myself to studying it. I analyzed it and thought to myself: this is so beautiful; I would love to compose like this guy. The misfortune was losing that piece of paper; I will never forgive myself. Shortly afterwards, he died. It was then that I wrote *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*.<sup>239</sup>

In *Retrato*, Piazzolla’s past and present coexist through both stylistic and literal quotes that evoke an older tango style. This technique is taken from certain forms of Western art music rather than tango. Piazzolla affirms this compositional strategy in the statement below:

This tango [*Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*] is strongly linked to Gobbi as well as to Antonio Agri. In the two violin solos accompanied by the trio of the quintet, Agri performs a sort of imitation of Alfredo Gobbi, his sound, his style. I do my best to make this piece resemble Alfredo Gobbi, and I think we have done it.<sup>240</sup>

Many passages feature reminiscences of techniques and gestures known as *yeites*<sup>241</sup> in the Gobbi style, found in Gobbi’s most famous tangos: *Orlando Goñi* (1950), *Camandulaje* (1954), *Redención* (1958-1960<sup>242</sup>), and *El andariego*<sup>243</sup> (1951). *Orlando Goñi* is, in turn, a tribute by Gobbi to the brilliant pianist Orlando Goñi, who was also a major influence on Piazzolla during his years as a musician in Aníbal Troilo’s

<sup>239</sup> Blog accessed June 18, 2014.

<http://tangosalbardo.blogspot.nl/2014/04/redencion.html?showComment=1403174991230#c2257482717412473069>

<sup>240</sup> Interview with Astor Piazzolla on TV show *Sábados de Tango*, hosted by Miguel Ángel Manzi. Available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAYGME7UaHY>. Accessed June 18, 2014.

<sup>241</sup> In tango jargon, a *lunfardo* word used to refer to (among other things) tricks and typical features of a certain musician in the performance of tangos.

<sup>242</sup> Approximate dates, as there is no record of the precise year of its composition.

<sup>243</sup> Analyzed in Pugliese’s chapter, and explicitly quoted in *Retrato*.

orchestra.<sup>244</sup> Thus, in *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*, Piazzolla summarizes features of both Gobbi and Goñi's music that he incorporated into his own writing, establishing them as distinctive features of his style. From Gobbi, Piazzolla took the lyrical and phrased violin solos with intense vibrato, portamento and expressive ornaments (later transferring them to his bandoneon language), certain syncopated rhythms and the metric pattern 3-3-2 (which Gobbi may have inherited from Julio De Caro's orchestra).<sup>245</sup> From Goñi, he took the technique of ornamenting the structural notes of the solos with several grace notes (which the pianist played in the low register) and the use of the 3-3-2 pattern with octave leaps, sometimes ornamented with a half-step acciaccatura (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Goñi's octaves

*Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi* presents two contrasting sections in the traditional manner: a rhythmical **A**, and a melodic **B**. Based on their main features, in this analysis the phrases will be classified as either melodic or rhythmical. These two types of phrases are primarily presented in contrasting blocks.

The rhythmical phrases are characterized by the following: two-bar ostinato motives organized in regular phrases (in general, the traditional eight-bar lengths are maintained), instrumentation in homorhythymical or superimposed blocks, faster tempos and virtuosic passages. These two-bar rhythmical ostinatos – transposed to different pitches without modulation or any evident theme<sup>246</sup> – are characteristic of Piazzolla's music. The systematization of this device can be observed throughout many of his compositions, some of which are almost monothematic due to the omnipresence of an ostinato (for example *Tres minutos con la realidad*, *Tanguedia*, *Fracanapa* and *Golazo*). This linear treatment of musical materials was introduced by Osvaldo Pugliese (in *Negracha*, *La yumba* and *Malandraca*), whose model Piazzolla adopted and developed further.

The melodic phrases – some of them evoking Gobbi's language – are characterized by a slower tempo, the occurrence of extended phrased solos (mainly on the violin, paying tribute to Gobbi) and irregular phrases, oftentimes longer than the usual eight bars. Taking into account Gobbi's well-deserved nickname, “the romantic violin of tango”, and the fact that Piazzolla represents a kind of explosive tango<sup>247</sup> through his rhythmical and interpretative power, the clear distinction between rhythmical and

<sup>244</sup> Piazzolla, Diana: Astor; Buenos Aires: Emece, 1987, p. 115. She quotes Piazzolla as saying: “Goñi drove me crazy. When I already played in Pichuco [Troilo]’s orchestra, I would sit behind him with a notebook and write down everything he played so I could imitate it later on the bandoneon.”

<sup>245</sup> Mauriño, Gabriela: “Raíces tangueras en la obra de Astor Piazzolla”, in García Brunelli, Omar (editor): *Estudios sobre la obra de Astor Piazzolla*; Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical Ediciones, 2008, p. 21.

<sup>246</sup> “Theme” is referred to as defined in the Glossary.

<sup>247</sup> When Pugliese was asked what he liked most about Piazzolla, he answered: “his drive”. That reply serves as an excellent summary of his musical personality.

melodic sections seems only natural. Thus, the typical contrast is maintained and generalized by the addition of both real and symbolic dialogues: between sections, between ensemble and solo passages, between past and present, and between rhythmical and lyrical languages.

The following formal scheme shows the structure of the piece<sup>248</sup> and the diverse tonalities used (indicated “Ton.”):

Section	A						B			
Phrase	a1	a2	a3	a4	a5	a6	b1	b2	b3	b4
Bar #'s	1-8	9-16	17-24	25-32	33-42	43-51	53-62	63-70	71-83	84-96
Ton.	G-minor						E-m	F#-m		B-m
Section	A'			B'		A''			coda	
Phrase	a7	a8	a9	b5	b6	Bridge	a10	a11	-	
Bar #'s	97-103	104-112	113-120	121-129	130-137	138-141	142-150	151-161	162-170	
Ton.	G-m	Bb-minor		B-m		Bm-Cm	C-m	C#-m		

Figure 2: formal scheme of *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*

As in many pieces by Piazzolla, the quantity of modulations is larger than usual and includes many foreign tonalities. At the end of this piece, Piazzolla uses the same ascending chromatic progression as in *Milonga del ángel*: B-minor, C-minor, and C#-minor (bars 121-170).

### Section A (from bar 1 to bar 51), [00:00-02:00]

This first section encompasses six phrases: five of them are rhythmical (**a1**, **a2**, **a3**, **a4** and **a6**) and one is melodic (**a5**), foreshadowing the evocative features of section **B**. In the first rhythmical segment (**a1**, **a2**, **a3**, and **a4**; bars 1-32) Piazzolla presents four eight-bar phrases in homorhythmical blocks, fully based on a two-bar ostinato. This ostinato undergoes a cumulative process of ‘thematization’ from **a1** to **a4**, which is noticeable in the development of the ostinato: from mainly repeated notes (**a1** and **a2**) to repeated notes alternating brief, articulated melodic passages (**a3**) and eventually to articulated ostinatos without repeated notes and featuring a clear melodic profile (**a4**). Moreover, from the first to the fourth phrase additional gradual processes are used to unify the formal structure and build momentum:

- The tempo gradually increases.
- The rhythmical and accentual variation of the motive is executed in such a way that it gradually diverges from the rhythmical base. The piece begins in rhythmical-accentual unison and then increasingly deviates from it.
- The main textural layer is thickened by a gradual increase in instrumental density.

The first two phrases (**a1** and **a2**) are the only ones that are repeated in the entire piece. Motives alternate between rhythmical-accentual alignment and contrast with

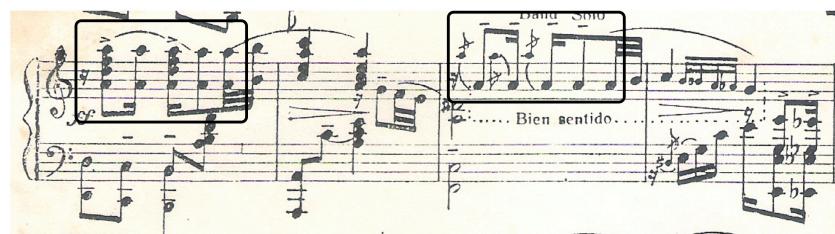
<sup>248</sup> I kindly thank Claudio Constantini for sending me the transcription used for this analysis.

the marcato in *yumba*, which Piazzolla inherits from Pugliese. The repeated pitches used in *Retrato* may be derived from fragments of the above-mentioned pieces by Gobbi (Fig. 3). These repeated pitches are sometimes presented with octave leaps in the Goñi style (Figs. 2 and 3), but now with a rhythmical and accentual variation in relation to the typical 3-3-2 of the pianist.

*Camandulaje*, section A



*Orlando Goñi*, section B



*Orlando Goñi*, section C

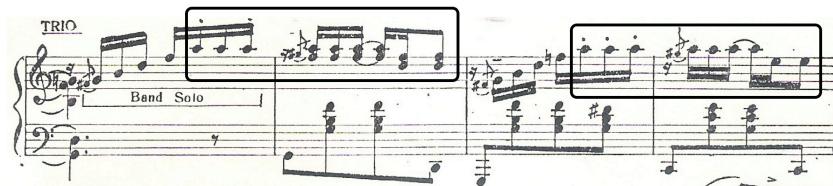


Figure 3: repeated notes and leaps of an octave in Gobbi's pieces

**a1** (bars 1-8) [00:00-00:21]: this first phrase is made up of a motive of two nearly identical bars, which are repeated, followed by two additional statements of the motive transposed a half-step higher (Fig. 4). The use of half-step ornaments and chromatic passages is a characteristic tango feature used regularly by Piazzolla in the melody and in the bass line. He here extends the use of chromatic motion to consecutive modulations.

Figure 4: motive of *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi* in **a1**, bars 3-6 [00:05-00:16], with indication of the above-mentioned features

**a2**, (bars 9-16), [00:21-00:40]: this phrase is almost identical to **a1**. The only difference is the transposition of the motive (here, a half-step lower) and its position in the phrase (Fig. 5).

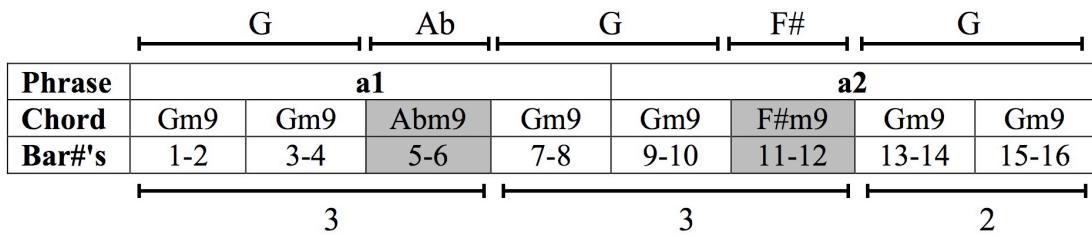


Figure 5: motivic organization in **a1** and **a2**

The sequence of transpositions used (G-Ab-G-F#-G) mirrors the typical tango ornament of a turn, using a main note (in this case, G) plus an upper neighbor (Ab) and a lower neighbor (F#). In addition, the repeated notes in the ostinato are built on the  $\hat{5}$  of each chord of the harmony and, thus, produce a turn in the melodic profile as well, in this case D-Eb-D-C#-D. The turn is a figure used in many tangos, and is the head-motive of *Don Agustín Bardi* by Horacio Salgán and of *Encuentro* by Gustavo Beytelmann (both analyzed in this dissertation). Moreover, the transpositions are organized macro-rhythmically (over a long stretch of 16 bars) by the turn (Ab-F#-G) into groups of 3, 3 and 2 segments of two bars each (indicated in Fig. 5).

**a3** and **a4** present different variations of the motive. They are syncopated (in contrast with the previous ones) and, as already mentioned, increasingly thematic.

**a3** (bars 17-24), [00:40-00:57], (Fig. 6): the ostinato motive is repeated four times without transposition, with a marcato in 4 and a G pedal in the bass line.

**a4** (bars 25-32), [00:57-01:14], (Fig. 7): is made up of two semi-phrases and constitutes the first clear theme of the piece, while the rhythm and articulation of the previous ostinatos are maintained. The bass line also changes, here becoming melodic. This sub-section ends with a diminuendo and a rallentando that prepares for the following phrase **a5**.

Figure 6: motive of **a3**, bars 17-18 [00:40-00:44]

Figure 7: motive of **a4**, bars 25-28 [00:57-01:05]

**a5** (bars 33-42), [01:14-01:43], (Fig. 8): this phrase is of a contrasting, lyrical character and slower tempo, all of which foreshadow section **B**. A phrased violin solo begins in a medium-low register and introduces the ascending minor sixth characteristic of section **C** in *El andariego* (indicated with an oval in Fig. 8). These bars present a clear gradual reduction of accompanimental materials: they begin with articulated rhythmical motives, then move to a harmonic background, which allows

the violin to finally play freely and lead to the following phrase, which is again rhythmical (Fig. 8).

Figure 8: **a5**, bars 33 with upbeat-42 [01:13-01:43]

**a6** (bars 43-51), [01:43-02:00]: Piazzolla abruptly begins a rhythmical phrase in E-minor, with no modulation or preparation for the new tonality. These features, along with a faster tempo and *ff* dynamics, create a huge contrast with the previous phrase. **a6** resumes the rhythmical ostinato: bars in which the repeated notes of **a1-a4** are further emphasized and alternate with passages of stepwise motion. From bar 45 till the end of this phrase, Piazzolla's typical marcato in 3-3-2 occurs for the first time, further emphasized by tutti accents on the strong beats of the marcato (Fig. 9).

Figure 9: motive of **a6**, bars 43-46 [01:43-01:51], with indication of the above-mentioned features

### Section B (from bar 53 with upbeat to bar 96), [02:00-04:03]

This lyrical section, which is completely separated from the previous one through a brief pause, affirms the typical contrasting character of section **B**. The new tonality (F#-minor) enters abruptly with the traditional tango upbeat figure of four ascending chromatic sixteenth-notes in the bass line, in this case only by the piano's left hand.

**b1** (from bar 53 to bar 62), [02:00-02:21]: in this ten-bar phrase the violin plays a solo in the high register with an accompaniment consisting of two differentiated textural layers. In one layer, the rhythmical base presents a marcato in 4 with the chords (right hand of the piano) in 3-2-3 (or occasionally in 3-5, where the 2-3 is tied together); in the other layer, the bandoneon and the guitar present a countermelody in unison derived from the articulated motive of the previous section. The use of rhythmical ostinatos to accompany a melodic solo is another typical feature of Piazzolla's music (Fig. 10).

Figure 10: beginning of section **B**, bars 53 with upbeat-54 [02:00-02:06], with indication of the above-mentioned features

Between the violin solo here (**b1**) and the violin solo in **b3**, a phrase (**b2**) is inserted and functions as a bridge.

**b2** (from bar 63 to bar 70), [02:21-02:38]: is based on the repetition of three two-bar motives related to the ostinato in the beginning of the piece. Here the marcato is interrupted and the rhythmical base only plays long sustained chords that provide the harmony.

**b3** (bars 71-83), [02:38-03:35], (Fig. 11): the violin solo is again preceded by a chromatic upbeat figure with which a new tonality is established (B-minor). With this solo, the violin emphatically evokes the atmosphere of Gobbi's orchestra. The accompaniment contributes to the intimate character with its light syncopations and a slower tempo. At this point, the tribute to Orlando Goñi most clearly shows: the *bordoneo* in the piano left hand presented here was his distinctive device. In this phrase a sort of dialogue begins between Gobbi (evoked in the violin solo) and Goñi (evoked in the piano bass line), while Piazzolla remains silent to give greater room to his soloists. Towards the end of **b3**, the bandoneon plays a connecting passage to the following phrase (in G-minor), in which he again acts as the soloist (Fig. 12).

**b4** (from bar 85 to bar 96), [03:35-04:03]: in this bandoneon solo (which effectively starts already in bar 83) the ornamented violin phrasing continues as a countermelody over Piazzolla's unmistakable rhythmical base in 3-3-2. Thus, Piazzolla pays tribute to his maestros while demonstrating the maturation of his own style.

Figure 11: beginning of **b3**, bars 71-74 [02:38-02:55]

Figure 12: connection between **b3** and **b4**, bars 82-86 [03:20-03:41]

### Section A' (from bar 97 to bar 120), [04:03-05:00]

Section A' begins with yet another abrupt change of character. It is organized into three phrases (**a7**, **a8** and **a9**) that are subdivided into semi-phrases through variations on the ostinato from the beginning of the piece (based on rhythms, marcato and motives).

**a7** (from bar 97 to bar 103), [04:03-04:17]: in this phrase, the ostinato from **a6** resumes and is varied. It lasts seven bars, perhaps to compensate for the nine-bar duration of **a6** and to create an eight-bar average between the two phrases. The accompaniment ceases in order to highlight the passage of repeated notes. In the second semi-phrase, the double bass and violin resume the marcato in 4, now with non-pitched effects (*strappata*, box slaps and *tambor*). As the main motive of this

phrase repeats, there is an increase in instrumental density by accumulation: one layer is added each bar, culminating in a parallel passage by the bandoneon, electric guitar and the right hand of the piano (Fig. 13). This gradual accumulation of layers demonstrates the development of orchestration in tango music.

Figure 13: beginning of **a7**, bars 97-101 [04:03-04:13]

**a8** (from bar 104 to bar 112), [04:17-04:39]: a modulation to Bb-minor marks the beginning of this phrase, which features a rhythmical motive derived from section **A**. The non-pitched marcato is maintained (connecting phrases **a7** and **a8**) while the tempo slows down. There occurs a decrease in both the instrumental density of the theme (only the bandoneon continues playing the main textural layer) and the rhythmical density of the accompaniment, which returns to a pitched marcato in the second semi-phrase.

**a9** (from bar 113 to 120), [04:39-05:00]: in this third and final phrase of section **A'**, the ostinato motive – now in tempo primo – is again varied through syncopated rhythms, which will return in the coda. Here the so-called *mugre* (“filth”) effect, so frequently used in Piazzolla’s music, is introduced (Fig. 14). This effect consists of playing a line with two simultaneous notes a minor second apart. It is widely used in syncopated fills and in order to dramatize a melodic line. According to Gabriela Mauriño, this technique was introduced in tango by violinists and later became incorporated by bandoneonists as a standard device on their instrument.<sup>249</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Mauriño, Gabriela: “Raíces”, p. 24.

Figure 14: beginning of **a9**, bars 117-118 [04:49-04:54], with indication of the above-mentioned features

### Section B' (from bar 121 to bar 137), [05:00-06:06]

Section **B'** begins in a new tonality (B-minor) with a phrased violin solo that literally quotes the three ascending minor sixths from section **C** in *El andariego*. This solo encompasses two phrases (**b5** and **b6**) and features a minimal accompaniment by the double bass and the guitar. The double bass plays three consecutive segments, each with a different marcato (syncopated, in 2 half-notes and then in 4) while the guitar plays small arpeggiated countermelodies. The lack of bandoneon and piano contributes to the prominence of the soloist and creates contrast with the following phrase. In the last bars of **b6** the ascending minor sixth of *El andariego* is again quoted. Unlike the abrupt transitions in previous sections, here a violent accelerando and crescendo lead to the final section **A''**.

### A'' (from bar 138 to bar 161), [06:06-06:51]

In this last occurrence of **A**, phrases **a10** and **a11** are irregular in length. These phrases are divided into semi-phrase variations constructed from previous materials. It starts with four connecting bars (bars 138-141, 06:06-06:13) that function as a bridge and prepare for the character of the following phrases through an increase in tempo and dynamics, while modulating to C-minor.

**a10** (from bar 142 to 150), [06:13-06:28]: Piazzolla's typical virtuosity is again displayed. The bandoneon plays a melody generated by a repeated motive that grows in rhythmical density while the textural and registral densities increase (Fig. 15). This process of cumulative development of the motive is innovative in tango music. The rhythmical base plays in 3-3-2 and the guitar and the violin reinforce the phrase first by means of rhythmical-percussive effects (bars 142-145) and then by thickening the melody (bars 146-150).

**a11** (from bar 151 to bar 161), [06:28-06:51]: in this last phrase the final tonality of the piece (C#-minor) enters abruptly, without modulation nor preparation. Throughout the phrase there is a superimposition of already used rhythms and effects, such as the marcato in *yumba*, accentual contrasts, thematic motives, the *mugre* effect and repeated notes. In the second semi-phrase (bars 155-158) there is an unmistakable quote of another fragment in *El andariego*'s section C (Fig. 16), played in unison by the guitar and the bandoneon (Fig. 17). Then follows a four-bar segment that continues the quote with variations and leads to the coda.

The musical score consists of five staves for Violin, Bandoneón, Electric Guitar, Piano, and Double Bass. The score is divided into two sections: bars 142-150 and bars 151-161. In bars 142-150, the instruments play in unison with dynamic markings like 'laja' and 'Tambor'. The Double Bass part includes a 'pizz.' instruction. The score then transitions to bars 151-161, where the instruments play in unison again, with dynamic markings like 'cresc.' and 'arco'.

Figure 15: **a10**, bars 142-150 [06:13-06:28], with indication of the above-mentioned features



Figure 16: excerpt of section C in *El andariego* quoted by Piazzolla

Figure 17: quote of *El andariego*, bars 155-161 in *Retrato* [06:37-06:51]

### Coda (from bar 162 to bar 170), [06:51-07:45]

The motive from **a9** returns in a varied form, as two four-bar symmetrical semi-phrases, with a marcato in 4 and a descending bass typical of Piazzolla. A rallentando and a diminuendo lead to the end of the piece.



### 3.5 *Adiós Nonino*

Music and arrangement by Astor Piazzolla.

First recorded on the album “Piazzolla interpreta a Piazzolla” in 1961, for the record company RCA Víctor. The analysis below is based on the recording from the album “Adiós Nonino”, for the record company Trova, 1969, with the following performers: Astor Piazzolla, bandoneon; Dante Amicarelli, piano; Antonio Agri, violin; Kicho Díaz, double bass and Oscar López Ruiz, electric guitar.

Duration: 8'02"

This emblematic piece was written by Astor Piazzolla in honor of his recently deceased father. Piazzolla believed it to be the best among all of his works:

*Adiós Nonino* is the best piece I've ever written. I tried to create something better a thousand times, without success. It has an intimate tone, it seems almost funereal, and yet it broke away from everything known so far. When we premiered it with our Quintet, the musicians and I thought, “This will die here. Nobody will like it, but let's play it anyway -it's so beautiful”. Those were the times when almost all our pieces were as vigorous as *Calambre*, *Los poseídos*, *Lo que vendrá*. *Adiós Nonino* ended just in the opposite way, as life itself: it wandered off and faded away little by little. People liked it right from the start. That's probably because it has a special mystery, the melody, and in contrast to the melody, the rhythmical part, the change of tone and such a glorious end with a sad ending. Maybe people liked it for that: it was different from everything else.<sup>250</sup>

*Adiós Nonino* has many typical features of Piazzolla's music already analyzed in this chapter: more modulations than in traditional tango, ostinato motives, long solos with unvarying instrumentation, and the rhythmical formula 3-3-2. In contrast, other characteristics of this piece occur less frequently in tango music, such as the enormous solo for the piano in the beginning and the bland ending of the piece, which is blurred by means of a rallentando and a diminuendo. Piazzolla also maintains some attributes of traditional tango: the piece is mostly crafted from two formal sections (A and B) that contrast in tempo and character, and consist mainly of regular eight-bar phrases, which are occasionally extended in order to demarcate new sections.

Two previously studied concepts are also reasserted. First, the music is composed for specific performers: Piazzolla writes with the quintet's musicians in mind and always highlights their virtues by means of tailor-made passages with which they will excel. Second, the group of soloists: both the solos (where accented notes rarely align with the beat) and the countermelodies in the accompaniment are interpreted in a phrased way, thereby generating a variety of overlapping phrased lines.

The following analysis is based on the score copied by José Bragato and the 1969 recording (including the above-mentioned piano solo). Figure 1 shows the formal scheme of the piece and its main characteristics.

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<sup>250</sup> Gorin, Natalio: *Astor Piazzolla - A manera de memorias*; Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1990, pp. 69-70.

Section	Intro	A		B			
Sub-s.	-	<b>a1</b>	<b>a2</b>	<b>b1</b>	<b>b2</b>	<b>b1'</b>	<b>[b3]</b>
Bar #'s	-	0-8	9-19	20-27	28-36	37-44	45-51
Qty.	57	9	8+3	8	8+1	8	4+3
Theme	piano	bnd.	bd+gt	violin		(tutti)	
Marcato	-	ymb-4	in 4	in 4		(mil.)	(long)
Tonality	(Ab m)	Am		C	E		
Main	-	rhythmical		melodic			

Section	A'				B'				Coda
Sub-s.	<b>a3</b>	<b>a4</b>	<b>a5</b>	<b>a6</b>	<b>b1''</b>	<b>b2''</b>	<b>b1'''</b>	<b>b3'</b>	-
Bars	52-59	60-67	68-76	77-84	86-93	94-102	103-110	111-116	117-122
Qty.	8	8	8	8+1	8	8+1	8	4+2	6
Theme	(tutti)	bnd-vl-guit		bandoneon					
Marc.	in 4		in 3-3-2		in 4	(mil.)	3-3-2	(long)	sync.
Ton.	C#m	Dm	Eb m	Em	G	B	G#m		
Speech	rhythmical				rhythmical			melodic	

Figure 1: *Adiós Nonino*'s formal scheme

### Initial piano solo [00:00-02:39]

Piazzolla added the initial solo of *Adiós Nonino* especially for pianist Dante Amicarelli after the piece was already finished and recorded. This initial solo represents a new element to the language of the genre, a peculiarity that is emphasized by its extreme duration – 2'39'', almost the full length of a traditional tango – and its development, more related to jazz and certain forms of Western art music than to the language of tango. Despite its improvisatory characteristics the solo is fully notated. Regarding its structure, it is divided into two sections that each present different phrases. The first section (bars 1-18) has the typical features of an introduction: materials of the piece are presented in a discontinuous, non-directional way, and the main themes are not revealed. The second section (bars 19-57), however, introduces theme **B** in a variety of ways: literally, varied, transposed and with cadential passages between phrases. Lastly, some fragments of this second section were generated from material in the coda of the piece.

### Section A (from bar 0 to bar 19), [02:39-03:20]

Section **A** is of a rhythmical, strongly articulated character. It is based on the piece *Nonino*, written by Piazzolla in 1954 (also dedicated to his father) and presents two phrases in A-minor that complement each other (**a1** and **a2**).

**a1** (from bar 0 to bar 8), [02:39:-02:58], (Fig. 2): in this phrase the bandoneon plays the theme over a repeated two-bar accompanimental motive. The theme consists of a repeating two-bar thematic motive that begins with an ascending arpeggiated triad and ends with an ascending chromatic appoggiatura followed by a descending chromatic

passage. This motive is stated first on the tonic and later moving to the dominant, with the same ending used for both (Fig. 2). The final note of this motive is anticipated by an eighth-note before the first beat of the following bar, generating a syncopation. In the first appearance of the motive (bars 0-2) this final note is held until the end of bar 2, stretching the motive's length to three bars and creating a standstill that is only resolved in the following bar. There, another irregular feature can be observed: the typical chromatic sixteenth-note upbeat figure in the bass is placed on the first beat of bar 2 instead of the fourth of bar 1. Thus, the end note A (on the second beat) is perceived as the beginning of the bar, and in doing so destabilizing the meter. Some would hear this irregularity as a  $5/4$  bar followed by a  $3/4$  bar. With this interpretation, the chromatic upbeat maintains its original function. From there, the phrase continues normally, with the usual marcato in 4 emphasized in *yumba* and the motive alternating between tonic and dominant harmonies, thickened by the addition of the guitar to the main textural layer.

The musical score consists of five staves: Piano, Bandoneon, Violin, Guitar, and Cello. The piano and bandoneon staves are at the top, with the bandoneon having a unique rhythmic pattern. The violin, guitar, and cello staves are below. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Above the score, there are annotations: 'semi-phrase' with a dashed line, 'motive' with a bracket, 'downbeat' with a square box, 'upbeat' with a circle box, 'anticip.' with an arrow pointing to a note in the bandoneon staff, and 'etc.' at the end of the score. The piano staff has dynamic markings 'ff' and 'f'. The bandoneon staff has dynamic markings 'ff' and 'ff'. The violin staff has dynamic markings 'f' and 'ff'. The guitar staff has dynamic markings 'f' and 'ff'. The cello staff has dynamic markings 'ff' and 'f'. The piano staff has performance instructions 'arco' and 'pizz.'. The bandoneon staff has performance instructions 'arco' and 'pizz.'. The violin staff has performance instructions 'arco' and 'pizz.'. The guitar staff has performance instructions 'arco' and 'pizz.'. The cello staff has performance instructions 'arco' and 'pizz.'.

Figure 2: beginning of a1, bars 0-5 [02:39-02:56],  
with indication of the above-mentioned features

**a2** (from bar 9 to bar 19), [02:58-03:20]: this phrase begins with two contrasting bars (bars 9-10) before resuming the main motive, which is repeated twice and then varied in order to lead to the brief modulating bridge (bars 18-19) preceding section **B**. In the bridge, the slower tempo and cantabile character of theme **B** are established.

Section **B** (from bar 20 to bar 51), [03:20-04:52]

Section **B** presents the typical contrast to section **A**, now with music of a slower, more melodic character. In bar 19 the violin begins a solo that encompasses three whole phrases (**b1**, **b2**, and **b1'**). The violin's upbeat figure derives from the ascending opening of the motive in section **A**.

**b1** (from bar 20 to bar 27), [03:20-03:50]: the celebrated theme of *Adiós Nonino* is presented in the relative major tonality of C. It is divided into two symmetrical semi-phrases a whole-step apart made up of brief, one-bar motives (unlike the two-bar motives of theme **A**). The motive's melodic profile is quite simple: a single pitch followed by an ever-changing upbeat figure (Fig. 3). The motivic and rhythmical structure of the theme is similar to that of *Milonga del ángel* (Fig. 4). As already mentioned, the simple melodic lines in both works get more personality through a well phrased performance. A melodic profile based on repeated notes is not a frequent occurrence in tango. Some examples found include *Nostalgias*, by Juan Carlos Cobián; *Che bandoneón*, by Aníbal Troilo; *Volver* by Carlos Gardel; *Naranjo en flor*, by Homero and Virgilio Expósito; and *Tú* and *Fuimos*, by José Dames (Fig. 5).

Figure 3: theme of the violin in section **B**, bars 20-38 [03:20-04:24], with indication of the above-mentioned features

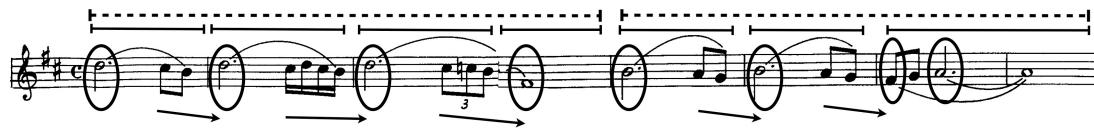


Figure 4: theme of *Milonga del ángel*, bars 20-38, with indications

*Nostalgias*  
section A

*Volver*  
section A

*Naranjo en flor*,  
section B

Figure 5: other tangos with repeated notes in their melodic profile

The relationship between theme and rhythmical base is salient in both section **A** and section **B**. In section **A**, the motive begins with an eighth-note rest and the marcato begins on a downbeat (Fig. 2), while in section **B** the motive begins on a downbeat and the marcato harmonies are syncopated (Fig. 6), while the bass remains in 4. The resulting rhythmical-accentual contrast enlivens the piece and helps to differentiate the layers. The organization of the bass line in this segment is another representative feature of Piazzolla's music. According to musicologist Ramón Pelinsky, some repeated formulas in the bass line are inter-textual: in his diverse compositions Piazzolla invents new musical surfaces and places them over similar harmonic structures with their respective similar bass lines.<sup>251</sup> In *Adiós Nonino*, the bass line consists of four quarter-notes repeating a single pitch, which descend each bar (first chromatically, then diatonically) and at each new semi-phrase leap upwards to begin the process again (Fig. 7). The stillness of this section is due to the repetitive nature of both the melody and the bass, which may be related to the notion of a mournful air. According to musicologist Allan Atlas, both the minor ninths Bb over an A7-chord and C over a B7-chord in bars 23 and 27 (indicated in Fig. 3) could be associated with

<sup>251</sup> Pelinsky, Ramón: "Astor Piazzolla: entre tango y fuga, en busca de una identidad estilística", in García Brunelli, Omar (editor): *Estudios sobre la obra de Astor Piazzolla*; Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical Ediciones, 2008, p. 40.

the idea of death, featured in this piece and in Piazzolla's *María de Buenos Aires* (1967-1968).<sup>252</sup>

Figure 6: beginning of section B, bars 19-21 [03:20-03:31], with indication of the above-mentioned features

Figure 7: line of the double bass in B, bars 20-36 [03:24-04:18], with indication of the above-mentioned features

<sup>252</sup> Atlas, Allan: "Astor Piazzolla: tangos, funerales y *blue notes*", in García Brunelli, Omar (editor): *Estudios sobre la obra de Astor Piazzolla*; Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical Ediciones, 2008, p. 80.

**b2** (from bar 28 to bar 36), [03:50-04:15]: this phrase, also divided into two semi-phrases, complements the previous one. In the first semi-phrase (bars 28-31) the rhythmical base remains in 4 while the harmonic part of the marcato is transformed into a two-bar motivic countermelody (Fig. 8). In the second semi-phrase (bars 32-36) the accompaniment is brought together into a single layer: a simple whole-note per bar that leaves room for the soloist to phrase. The double bass again plays quarter-notes that descend from bar to bar, diatonically in the first semi-phrase and chromatically in the second. The motive also undergoes a process of expansion (Fig. 3): one bar long in **b1**; about one and a half bars long in the first semi-phrase of **b2**; and two bars long in the second semi-phrase of **b2**.

Figure 8: beginning of **b2**, bars 28-29 [03:50-03:56], with indication of the above-mentioned features

In the second semi-phrase (bar 32) the upbeat figure with which section **A** started reappears. Then, the upbeat figure used in bar 19 to begin **b1** is used again at the end of **b2** (bar 36), resulting in a one-bar extension that demarcates the beginning of **b1'** (Fig. 3).

**b1'** (from bar 37 to bar 44), [04:15-04:39], (Fig. 9): this phrase restates **b1** in a new tonality (E-major), in a higher register and with minor variations. The violin continues to play the theme, texturally thickened by the rhythmical and accentual unison of part of the harmonic accompaniment (the piano's right hand and the bandoneon's left hand). It is the first moment of the piece that the double bass, the ripieno and the theme begin on the downbeat. Their rhythmical and accentual alignment on the first beat of every bar marks this phrase in a distinguished way. The bass line also has a strong similarity to that of *Milonga del ángel*. It consists of a rhythm derived from the *milonga campera* played with a single pitch, and descends chromatically each bar. In the second semi-phrase, the melodic profile is altered and the dynamics are increased, leading to the following phrase [**b3**].

Figure 9: beginning of **b1'**, bars 37-38 [04:18-04:24], with indication of the above-mentioned features

**[b3]** (from bar 45 to bar 51), [04:39-04:52]: this fragment functions as a bridge to the return of section **A**. The previous phrases of section **B** (**b1**, **b2** and **b1'**) create the expectation that we will move next to **b2'**. However, this phrase differs greatly from **b2**, creating a stronger division from the following section. It is also divided into two semi-phrases, in this case of four and three bars in length. In the first semi-phrase (bars 45-48), the theme from **b1** is varied and presented homorhythmically (the first occurrence of this texture) with a repeated quarter-note rhythm, emphasized by *ff* dynamics (Fig. 10). In the second semi-phrase (bars 49-51), the theme from **b1** is again varied, although its rhythm is maintained (Fig. 11). Finally, in this phrase the double bass joins the main textural layer (Fig. 11).

Figure 10: beginning of **b1'**, bars 37-38 [04:39-04:42]



Figure 11: end of b3, bars 48-51 [04:43-04:53]

### Section A' (from bar 52 to bar 84), [04:52-06:03]

This section contains four phrases – twice as many as in section A – in which the A motive is transformed into a two-bar rhythmical ostinato. Each two-bar ostinato is presented in the tonic and then in the dominant, forming a semi-phrase which is then repeated to form a regular eight-bar phrase. In section A', every phrase presents a new tonality a half-step higher: **a3** is in C#-minor (the relative minor of the previous phrase), **a4** in D-minor, **a5** in Eb-minor and **a6** in E-minor. This ascending chromatic motion in some way compensates for the descending chromatic pattern of the bass in previous phrases, repeating a technique already analyzed in *Milonga del ángel* and *Tres minutos con la realidad*.

**a3** (from bar 52 to bar 59), [04:52-05:09]: the instrumentation in this phrase is divided into two blocks. The main textural layer is presented by the piano's right hand, the bandoneon's left hand, the guitar and the violin, while the left hand of the piano and the double bass perform a repeated quarter-note bass line in stepwise motion (Fig. 12).

52

pno. bnd. vln. guit. d.b.

52

ostinato  
bass

ostinato

ostinato

ostinato  
bass

Figure 12: a3, bars 52-59 [04:52-05:09]

**a4** (from bar 60 to bar 67), [05:09-05:25]: this phrase maintains the rhythm of the previous phrase **a3**, but now with a different melodic profile. As in the beginning of the piece, a rhythmical countermelody functions as a fill during the moments when the theme features long notes (Fig. 13).

60

pno. bnd. vln. guit. d.b.

Arco

Figure 13: beginning of a4, bars 60-61 [05:09-05:13]

**a5** (from bar 68 to bar 76), [05:25-05:41]: the main textural layer maintains a rhythm similar to the previous phrases **a3** and **a4**, but now with a melodic profile of descending half-steps. The rhythmical base presents the essential 3-3-2 (Fig. 14).

Figure 14: beginning of **a5**, bars 68-69 [05:25-05:29], with indication of the above-mentioned features

**a6** (from bar 77 to bar 84), [03:41-06:03]: the last variation on the initial motive is presented with a rhythmical marcato in 4 and timbral-percussive effects in the violin (*chicharra* and *tambor*). As happened previously, a bar is added at the end to clearly demarcate the beginning of the next section, **B'**.

**B'** (from bar 86 to bar 116) [06:03-07:33]:

Here, the contrasting tempo and lyrical character of section **B** return. This section is divided into four phrases in which the bandoneon presents the main theme in a phrased solo of unusual length (31 bars).

**b1''** (from bar 86 to bar 93) [06:03-06:31]: **b1** recurs in G-major, with the addition of an accompanimental countermelody, again derived from the initial ascending motive (Fig. 15).

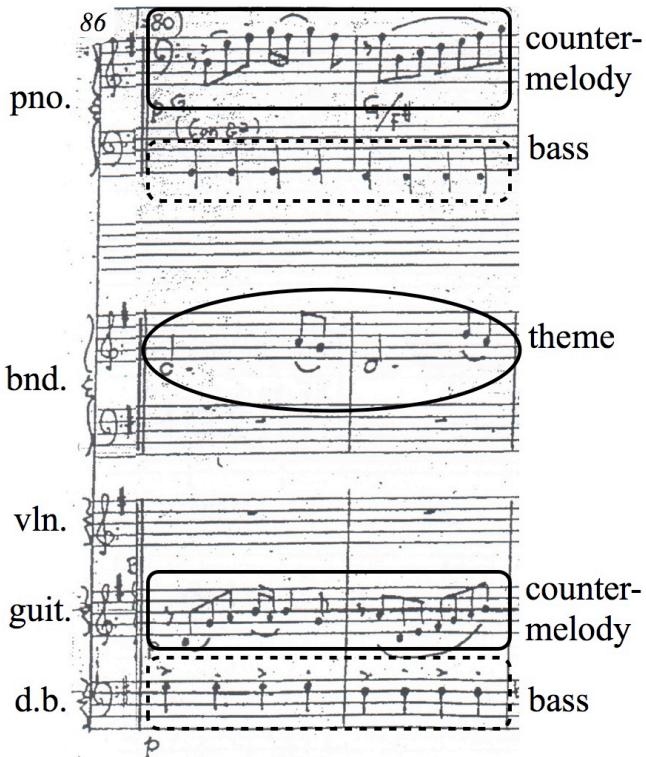


Figure 15: beginning of **b1''**, bars 86-87 [06:03-06:13], with indication of the above-mentioned features

**b2''** (from bar 94 to bar 102) [06:31-06:59]: **b2** recurs transposed to G-major. A connecting bar is added at the end, introducing the 3-3-2 rhythm of the following phrase (**b1'''**). There is a gradual transition to the subsequent tempo and dynamics.

**b1'''** (from bar 103 to bar 110) [06:59-07:17]: the climax of the piece is reached in this phrase. The lyrical theme of *Adiós Nonino* appears for the last time, in a quicker tempo, with *ff* dynamics and emphasized both by the marcato in 3-3-2 and by a lyrical countermelody in the violin. Again, all the instruments enter on the downbeat, generating the same effect as in **b1'**.

**b3'** (from bar 111 to bar 116) [07:17-07:33]: **b3** returns with slight variations and leads to the coda.

**Coda** (from bar 117 to bar 122), [07:33-08:02]: the violin evokes the lyrical **B** theme for the last time as the piece fades away with a *rallentando* and a *diminuendo* that lead to the final ascending arpeggio.

### 3.6 Review of this chapter and additional remarks

The pieces composed by Piazzolla feature, on the one hand, new elements of vital importance for the development of tango music and, on the other, traditional aspects of the genre that he advanced further, and which have now become strictly linked to his style. The indelible mark he left on tango is so strong that many ensembles “after the Piazzolla era” emulate his style. He also played a central role in the globalization of tango music, while helping to raise it to the new status of concert chamber music.

The main techniques analyzed in this chapter are summarized below.

#### Regarding formal, textural and melodic features

- Creation of melodic lines: Piazzolla’s themes – based on structural notes and heavy ornamentation – have no major differences from those of traditional tango. However, many of his melodies are made from a small number of materials that gain significance through their superb interpretation and performance. Some melodies are derived from the marcato bass line (*Milonga del ángel*), an idea that Piazzolla may have taken from *La bordona*<sup>253</sup>, by Emilio Balcarce. Some themes simply consist of repeated notes (*Adiós Nonino*, *Milonga del ángel*), or use only a single pitch in an entire semi-phrase (*Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*). The melodic profiles based on repeated notes are enriched by ornaments and orchestration, as in the beginning of *Milonga del ángel*, in which the piano performs acciacaturas that are typical of the bandoneon’s phrasing. The use of repetitive motives as a main textural layer was not common in tango. This technique, introduced by Pugliese, was systematized by Piazzolla in many of his works.
- Formal organization of motives, phrases and sections: Piazzolla’s works are generally divided into the usual formal sections **A** and **B**, contrasting in both tempo and character. Sections mainly consist of regular eight-bar phrases, which are sometimes extended to signal modulations or formal changes (a device already seen in Pugliese’s works). The phrases and sections may be interwoven (*Milonga del ángel*), tied together by a connecting passage (*Tres minutos con la realidad*) or separated abruptly through a brief pause (*Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*). Phrases are generally made up of two-bar motives, which are repeated to form semi-phrases, as in traditional tango. However, Piazzolla also introduces some innovative techniques that had never before been used in tango:
  - a) Expanded duration of sections: Piazzolla creates sections made up of many phrases, which results in his pieces being unusually long. This is a major characteristic feature of his style, which allows other devices of his language, such as extensive solos to be used more frequently.
  - b) Asymmetrical formal sections: Piazzolla also creates sections with a diverse quantity of phrases, generating asymmetrical formal structures that were unusual in traditional tango. In *Tres minutos con la realidad*, for instance, the brief section **B** is simply a contrasting passage used to prevent monotony and to drop attention to the outer sections.

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<sup>253</sup> Analyzed in the following chapter.

c) Use of monothematic forms: in some works, the omnipresence of ostinatos results in a seemingly monothematic form. In *Tres minutos con la realidad*, for instance, the ‘contrasting’ section **B** is achieved by introducing a melodic line, but the ostinato from section **A** continues on.

d) Use of repeated formulas in the bass line: Piazzolla invents new musical surfaces over similar harmonic structures with their respective similar bass lines. This can happen within the same piece or between diverse pieces in which those materials are used inter-textually.

- Duration of solos: the length of the solos in Piazzolla’s works is unprecedented in the history of tango. This innovation could derive from his close relationship to jazz, and connects with his use of expanded formal sections and his treatment of tango ensembles as a group of soloists. Some noteworthy examples are the initial piano solo of *Adiós Nonino* and the bandoneon solo of *Milonga del ángel*. In addition, many solos contain elements derived from Western art music and jazz: percussive chords in Bartók’s style on the piano and various virtuosic passages that sound improvised, even though Piazzolla usually notated them in full.

- Thematic generalization: the materials introduced in the theme and the bass line in the first phrase of a piece are reused in successive phrases, in varied and transposed forms (*Tres minutos con la realidad*).

- Use of rhythmical-melodic ostinatos: two-bar ostinatos lacking a clear theme – freely transposed to various pitches without modulation – are characteristic of Piazzolla’s music. The systematization of this technique can be observed in many of his compositions, in which the ostinatos may function as a main textural layer, as a ripieno or as an accompanimental figure.

- Cumulative development of the motive: a melody is generated through a repeated motive that grows in rhythmical density from bar to bar (*Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*).

- Use of phrasing: Piazzolla uses typical tango phrasing in all of his pieces, particularly in the solos. As usual in a phrased solo, the long notes of the melody – written on the downbeat – rarely align with the first beat of each bar in performance, while the ornamentation used differs from the score as well as from recording to recording. In the case of the quintet, the accompanimental countermelodies are phrased as well, in doing so generating multiple overlapping phrasings, a core feature of this “ensemble of soloists”.

- Textural treatment: most of Piazzolla’s pieces have a texture consisting of melody and accompaniment, as is typical of the genre. Still, the occasional passage introduces polyphony through imitation or through different and overlapping melodic lines (*Tres minutos con la realidad*).

- Contrary motion between textural layers: in some pieces (*Milonga del ángel*, *Tres minutos con la realidad*, *Adiós Nonino*), the ascending motion of the theme contrasts with the descending motion of the bass.

- Use of a tango rhythm at the formal level: Piazzolla transfers the rhythmical pattern of his most characteristic rhythm 3-3-2 to diverse levels of the formal structure. He

creates phrases consisting of groups of 3, 3 and 2 bars, and sections consisting of groups of 3, 3 and 2 phrases. This constitutes a deviation from the formal structure of traditional tango, which is usually based on binary patterns such as simple meter, two semi-phrases within a phrase, two phrases within a section and two sections within a piece. Added to this, in *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*, even chord changes are macro-rhythmically organized into groups of 3, 3 and 2 segments.

- Use of tango-related melodic features at the phrase level: in *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*, the sequence of transpositions used (G-Ab-G-F#-G) mirrors the typical tango ornament of a turn, using a main note (in this case, G) plus an upper neighbor (Ab) and a lower neighbor (F#).
- Introduction of static sections or phrases: Piazzolla presents entire sections in which the instrumentation, dynamics, register, rhythmical base, harmony and other aspects that are usually varied in tango are kept unchanged.
- Approach to ensemble writing: Piazzolla treats his ensembles (especially the quintet) as groups of soloists, probably inspired by the jazz bands he admired. Many of his innovations in composition and orchestration stem from this approach. Piazzolla writes with the quintet's musicians in mind and always highlights their unique strengths by means of tailor-made passages with which they will excel (this also relates to the above-mentioned length of instrumental solos).
- Unifying processes: Piazzolla utilizes gradual processes that can unify the piece and that progress throughout multiple phrases and formal sections. In *Tres minutos con la realidad*, for instance, he connects the various transpositions of the motive by steadily increasing the instrumental density, dynamics and tessitura.
- Use of quotes: in *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*, Piazzolla uses both literal and stylistic quotes that evoke the orchestras in the 1940s. This technique was taken from certain forms of Western art music rather than tango.
- Use of typical tango elements: Piazzolla's music consists mainly of traditional tango materials, although they appear frequently in new contexts. These elements include: *yumba*, 3-3-2 and other standard marcato, Goñi's octaves, ornaments, *bordoneo*, glissandos, half-step appoggiaturas, chromaticism, *arrastres* and timbral and percussive effects in all of the instruments (*chicharra*, *tambor*, *strappata*, box slaps, etc.).

## **Regarding orchestration**

- Use of instruments alien to tango: the timbre of the electric guitar constitutes another innovation in the tango world. In Piazzolla's music it is typically used to provide harmonic fills and countermelodies that contrast rhythmically and accentually with the rhythmical base. In addition, the instrument oftentimes performs soloistically or in

unison with the countermelody or the rhythmical base. At times, Piazzolla used the drums and the vibraphone<sup>254</sup>, also unusual instruments in tango.

- Aspects related to register, articulation and dynamics: Piazzolla's music features no major differences from tradition in its treatment of register, articulation and dynamics; he uses these elements to create contrasts and variety. However, he also presents phrases and sections in which these parameters remain fixed. For instance, the bandoneon in *Milonga del ángel* plays in a restricted tessitura throughout the entire piece. The technical abilities of his musicians enabled him to introduce bold innovations such as the virtuosic solos in all of the instruments (even including the double bass).

- Changes in instrumental density: Piazzolla occasionally uses a sequential process of instrumentation. Through a gradual accumulation or dispersal of instruments, he expands and contracts the orchestral mass.

- Use of the bandoneon: the bandoneon is clearly the main instrument of his ensembles. His soloistic role is demonstrated in extended solos and virtuosic passages that place him in the centre of his ensembles. He composed and arranged music based on his drive to play on stage.

### **Regarding variation**

- Use of modulation: the modulations used by Piazzolla to vary and enrich his pieces are innovative as they are more numerous than is typical in traditional tango and include many foreign tonalities. The new tonalities are established through either modulating passages or abrupt shifts, sometimes only preceded by the traditional tango upbeat of four ascending chromatic sixteenth-notes in the bass (*Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*). The frequent tonality changes were most probably used to enliven his repetitive patterns and to provide variation to his longer sections and compositions.

- Use of extended tonality: Piazzolla composed tonal music. Yet, he used altered chords, superimposed chords and octatonic scales (*Tres minutos con la realidad*), which rendered some of his compositions tonally ambiguous, a concept alien to the tango tradition. He also used passages of superimposed or successive fourths, in contrast to the more common harmonies and melodies based on thirds or sixths.

- Use of bass line: motion by primarily half- or whole-steps gives a new profile to the typical tango bass line.

- Relationship between theme and rhythmical base: in *Adiós Nonino*, when the theme is played on the downbeat, the accompanimental chords are syncopated, and when the theme is syncopated, the marcato is played on the downbeat. The resulting rhythmical-accentual contrast enlivens the piece and helps to differentiate the textural layers. The use of rhythmical ostinatos to accompany melodic solos is another typical feature of Piazzolla's music.

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<sup>254</sup> As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this instrument had already been used in Osvaldo Fresedo's orchestra.

- Ambiguity between background and foreground: this is a variation technique quite typical of tango music and already seen in previous chapters. It occurs when a secondary line takes the foreground and the main theme is concealed, hidden or positioned as a background layer.

- Process of “thematization” of a motive: this process is perceived in the development of the ostinato in the beginning of *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*. The ostinato progresses from mainly repeated notes, to repeated notes interspersed with brief melodic fragments, and eventually to articulated lines with a clear melodic profile.

### **Regarding rhythm and meter**

- Systematization of the 3-3-2 rhythm: Piazzolla takes the 3-3-2 rhythm from tradition and uses it so extensively that it becomes a main trait of his music. In addition to its original function as a rhythmical base, he extends this formula to other levels of his compositions, such as the formal structure of phrases and sections, and the rhythmical shape of melodies and countermelodies.

- Use of polyrhythm and meter: Piazzolla explores the many possibilities inherent in rhythmical patterns. His works feature several variations on the 3-3-2 rhythm (2-3-3, 3-2-3, 3-3-3-3-3-1 and 3-5, among others), both successively and simultaneously. These new rhythmical patterns include the polyrhythmical use of short ostinatos that are repeated independent from the 4/4 meter. A typical feature of Piazzolla’s works is the bass line made up of four quarter-notes per measure, which strongly expresses the meter and contrasts with the 3-3-2 pattern in another textural layer. This systematic use of superimposition of equivalent meters (4/4 and 3-3-2/8) is one of Piazzolla’s major contributions to tango.

- Use of traditional marcato: Piazzolla uses the rhythmical marcato inherited from the tradition. In contrast to Pugliese and Salgán, Piazzolla rarely combines different marcato within a single phrase, which gives a sense of continuity to his works. He occasionally thickens the bass line of the piano left hand with intervals of a perfect fifth, as Salgán did, and as will be seen again in Beytelmann’s chapter. As is usual in tango, the bass maintains a steady beat, which allows the rest of the instruments to phrase freely.

- Renewed use of typical marcato and bass lines: Piazzolla re-creates some characteristics of traditional marcato. An example of this is the atypical use of *arrastres* in the bass, which he uses in many consecutive bars or on the first beat of a bar instead of on the fourth (*Adiós Nonino*). The repetition of pitches in the bass is also innovative (although it may be related to the rudimentary expression of harmony in older tangos), as is the simplification of the bass line’s profile, which oftentimes has fewer pitches (such as the omission of  $\hat{3}$  in *Milonga del ángel*) or simply repeats a single pitch. In many cases, the bars featuring repeated notes have a descending motion from bar to bar. The use of homorhythmical accompaniment is another characteristic feature of Piazzolla’s music.

- Systematization of the slow *milonga* rhythm: Piazzolla systematizes this rhythm, adding it permanently to the genre in a new form that combines elements from the

two traditional kinds of *milonga*: *campera* and *ciudadana*. He uses this pattern as an accompanimental base as well as for shaping melodic lines.

- Use of a non-pitched marcato: in *Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi*, for instance, Piazzolla creates a marcato in 4 with non-pitched effects (*strappata*, box slaps and *tambor*) that for a while avoids to confirm the harmony. These kinds of effects were traditionally used to enliven an articulated passage, but were rarely found without an underlying pitched rhythmical base.

- Use of varied tango endings: Piazzolla finishes his pieces with a range of formulas that diverge from the usual I-V-I (over beats 1, 2 and 3 respectively) in the last bar of the piece. Instead, he systematizes the use of descending glissandos, slow ascending arpeggios and endings that fade away with a *rallentando* and a *diminuendo*.