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

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CONCLUSIONS



Conclusions

Focusing on the technical analysis of a corpus of pieces carefully selected from the creative output of the four musicians mentioned in the title – rather than on the socio-historical development of the genre – I describe in this dissertation the musical language of these key figures in the history of tango alongside with their contributions to and innovations in the genre. By showing the constant interaction of performative, compositional and arrangement practices, I propose a systematic approach for understanding tango music and also, given the scarcity of strict analytical literature in the field, some essential features of the genre's development.

Through the pieces analyzed in this dissertation, many features have come to light. The artistic concepts and theoretical foundations I have covered constitute in my opinion an original contribution to the knowledge and understanding of tango, and provide information which nowhere else can be found in order to comprehend how tango is being created, performed and transformed, whilst preserving its relevance as vivid contemporary music. This information – regarding techniques, processes and materials – establishes a detailed synopsis with which other musicians (and I) can develop their skills in arranging, composing and performing tango music. In addition, I have presented a set of research methods applicable to other pieces by both the same authors and other musicians, allowing the continuation of a research practice, which in the history of tango so far has been neglected. Therefore, I hope this dissertation will inspire future research that may shed additional light on the artistic processes that are implicit in the oeuvre of the tango luminaries.

The four artists studied here – Pugliese, Salgán, Piazzolla and Beytelmann – have helped to both define the model of tango music and to 'thicken' or stretch that model by making contributions of their own. This can be clearly seen in the way they took elements from the tradition and expanded upon them, while introducing new techniques and materials that renewed this musical language. In the case of Pugliese, Salgán and Piazzolla these contributions have been assimilated and are nowadays part of the main tango language. However, the in-depth contributions they made are oftentimes used in a superficial way. Their principal stylistic traits (such as Piazzolla's 3-3-2 and ostinatos, Pugliese's *yumba* and Salgán's syncopations) are frequently reproduced but deprived of the complex compositional constructions they were originally a part of. In the case of Beytelmann, I truly hope that other musicians will continue to explore his music and build upon his groundbreaking contributions.

I believe that tango's continued development and innovation will only be achieved through a better understanding of its main features and techniques, with which further experimentation and contributions will prove to be both possible and fruitful. This can then lead to new ways of approaching this musical language in a process similar to that of Pugliese, Salgán, Piazzolla and Beytelmann. Personally, the direct influence of these artists' works on my music has proved extremely useful and inspiring. I am now more conscious of this language's features with which I am better prepared to critically engage with tango music in general and my own way of making tango in particular. Through analysis and theoretical research I have found a great deal of features and details of which I was unaware while performing tango. Likewise, my way of playing this music after doing research has new attributes and a new approach. The procedures, strategies and creative processes – both theoretical and practical –

which I have unfolded in this research are now part of me and will continue to flourish beyond this project. Four years after the beginning of this venture I realize the greatest achievement of this work is to have been able to concentrate all my interests in a single project: writing music and text, performing tango, playing the piano, and doing research. This completeness would hardly have been achieved without the umbrella of an artistic research programme. From now on, I shall further build on the experience gained to continue a lifelong path of artistic development and discovery, in the hope that my performances and musical creations, as well as my view and understanding of music, will proceed as a whole and enable me to become a more knowledgeable and reflective artist.

Finally, beyond and behind tango music itself, other issues connected with its – and my – place of origin appeared. This is the musical and historical constitution of the genre that is connected to the River Plate area and its background, and in which I clearly recognize certain aspects of my culture and myself. I could state that tango as an art form can be considered a product of the many realms defined by an inheritance of contrasts, contradictions, mixtures and passions. Therefore, it is not surprising that all of this is traceable in the music, its origins and its development, as it is not too daring to expect that its future will expand upon those very same aspects. The artists expressed this universe each with their own voice in the music they created, whilst giving meaning to their art. I expect that the structural analysis of the chosen case studies will give a glance at this remarkable piece of heritage, beyond the strictly musical approach that was the core subject.

Below I summarize the set of techniques, processes and materials discussed in this dissertation.

Regarding formal features

In general, I have observed a gradual process of expansion of the formal size and variety of structures. In the development of tango seen in the analyses, pieces have become both longer and more asymmetrically built. Sections tend to contain more phrases, and those phrases may also be longer or present varied quantities of bars, making segmentation less predictable. In the case of Pugliese, Salgán and Piazzolla, extensions are mainly obtained through adding bars to regular eight-bar phrases, which is also the length of a typical tango theme. In the case of Beytelmann, this regularity is rarely maintained and phrases tend to be longer as they are determined by his equally longer themes. Apart from the usual contrast between themes, character, articulation, rhythm, modes, tonalities or instrumentation, Beytelmann introduces textural contrasts as well as contrast in the perception of the beat. In addition, he creates climaxes and segmentation by synchronizing changes in texture, register, dynamics, rhythm and other elements. Piazzolla also presents a new way of contrasting different formal sections, e.g. through superimposing a lyrical phrase over a rhythmical ostinato. Going against the conflicting nature of traditional tango, Piazzolla creates occasional sections in which instrumentation, dynamics, register, rhythmical base, harmony and other aspects are left unchanged.

The ways in which consecutive phrases or sections may be connected are summarized as follows:

- a) Interweaving or overlapping: this occurs when certain musical elements (i.e. pitches, rhythms, registers, motives) are maintained from one section to the next, making segmentation smoother and building momentum.
- b) Through connecting passages: consecutive phrases or sections are tied together by connecting passages. These might present complete melodies, brief figures, chords or even single notes. They can be classified as “affirming” when they maintain the character of the groups they link, or as “preparatory” when they announce the beginning of a new phrase with a different character.
- c) Clearly divided: some phrases or sections are abruptly divided by a brief pause.

Regarding melodic features

Typical melodic lines – based on structural notes and heavy ornamentation – are used by all four composers. The ornamentation derives from tango tradition as well, and includes the usual turns, a wide range of grace notes and both chromatic and diatonic motion connecting the chord-tones.

The themes are mainly organized through the repetition or combination of motives. However, some alternatives to that standard are utilized. Pugliese and Piazzolla, for example, use repetitive motives and ostinatos as a main textural layer even when they do not constitute clear themes. The systematization of this technique can be observed in many of Piazzolla’s compositions, in which the ostinatos may also act as a ripieno or as an accompanimental figure. Piazzolla as well creates themes consisting of very few materials or sometimes only repeated notes with ornamentation. In turn, Beytelmann uses ostinatos with a formal function: for emphasizing climactic moments and closing sections. He also uses brief, non-repeating motives to form melodic lines. In some of his pieces, individual motives are frequently reorganized to make up different melodic lines, some of which may contain, as part of their design or profile, a modulating structure that provides differentiation to the formal sections.

Another common feature is that the thematic construct is based upon intervals. Many pieces by Salgán, Pugliese and Beytelmann are based on the systematic use of certain intervals, which Beytelmann also uses harmonically.

Thematic generalizations are found as follows:

- a) In different textural layers: some features of the theme are used to create or vary motives of the accompaniment (countermelody, ripieno or rhythmical base).
- b) In different sections: use of materials or characteristic features from one section in other sections.
- c) As a monothematic form: the same theme is presented in different formal sections but in a varied manner.
- d) At the motivic level: the same motive is presented in a variety of consecutive and/or superimposed versions.

Melodic lines can be presented in various combinations exploring their possibilities of transformation: overlapped, out of phase, rhythmically varied, inverted, in imitation, in homorhythm and in free counterpoint. Other interesting features to create melodic

lines in a tango include the cumulative development of a motive, the use of quotes and the use of traits from Argentinian *folklore*.

Regarding harmonic features

Tango music is primarily tonal and harmonic structures are formed from the basic progressions I-IV, V-I or II-V-I. Although one can observe developments in the harmonic thinking throughout the work of the four musicians, they all preserve the basic principles. Pugliese and Salgán contributed more complex harmonic sequences through their use of secondary dominants and modulations. In the case of Piazzolla the boundaries of tonality are oftentimes stretched, while in the case of Beytelmann they are permanently expanded. The modulations used by both Piazzolla and Beytelmann are innovative as they are more numerous than is typical in traditional tango and they include foreign tonalities. These new tonalities are either established through modulating passages or begun abruptly. They both use altered and superimposed chords, although Piazzolla – who also used octatonic scales – did not apply this technique systematically. More typical of his language are the passages of superimposed or successive fourths, in contrast to the more traditional passages built from thirds or sixths. Beytelmann uses polytonality; chords are oftentimes superimposed and whether perceived as altered or extended chords they still maintain their harmonic functions. In addition, he alters certain scales in order to characterize specific passages or sections.

Regarding rhythm and meter

All four artists have used the possibilities inherent to the rhythmical patterns of tango extensively. They have expanded upon different combinations and even introduced newly developed *marcatos* that carry each one's signature. Pugliese introduced the *yumba*, a special type of *marcato* in 4, as well as the open ending "in the Pugliese style". Salgán's music expanded the use of syncopated rhythms, employing them in melodies, *ripienos* and accompaniments to enliven the rhythmical aspect of his works. This is most clearly exemplified by his *umpa-umpa* rhythm. He also used rhythmical features (mainly *marcato* in 4) to demarcate formal sections. Piazzolla systematized the 3-3-2 rhythmical pattern. His works feature a wide range of variations on it (2-3-3, 3-2-3, 3-3-3-3-1 and 3-5, among others). In addition to its original function as a rhythmical base, he used this pattern on other levels of his compositions, such as the formal structure of phrases and sections, and the rhythmical shape of melodic lines. He also systematized the slow *milonga* rhythm, definitively introducing it to the genre in a new version that combines elements from both the *milonga campera* and the *milonga ciudadana*. Beytelmann introduced the use of ever-changing rhythmical figures organized in such a way that they do not constitute patterns. In his music, the accompaniment layer may also be interspersed with the typical chords of the *marcato*, thematic passages, fragments of a *variación* and new variations based on traditional *marcatos*. Both Piazzolla and Beytelmann propose different kinds of endings that diverge from the traditional I-V-I (over beats 1, 2 and 3 – or 4 in Pugliese – respectively) in the last bar of the piece.

The use of elements that counteract or alter the steady beat is yet another central trait of tango music, and an aspect in which the styles of the four musicians meet. Rhythmical and accentual contrasts result in a complex musical tissue even while remaining in the traditional 4/4 meter. The most frequently used device by the four musicians is the extreme dynamic differentiation between accented and non-accented elements, and the placement of accented elements in parts of the bar that counteract the metric structure. Rhythmical and accentual patterns are constantly varied and help to give tango music its strong and articulated character. In addition, many forms of polyrhythm are created through the superimposition of different rhythms. Other elements used to alter the regularity of the steady beat include: upbeats, rhythmical shifts, *arrastres*, syncopation, phrases beginning with a rest on the downbeat, polyrhythm, articulation, ornamentation and frequent changes in *marcato*. A sequence of contrasting *marcato*s may occur within a short segment (Pugliese, Salgán, Beytelmann) or over larger formal units (Piazzolla), and they can either support or counteract the formal segmentation. Changes in the accompanying rhythmical base quite a few times stagger the entrance in the different textural layers or they are gradually introduced (a *marcato* can progressively become more rhythmical by means of the durations, articulations and dynamics used, or vice versa). The changes may occur smoothly, by means of a connecting passage, or they may happen abruptly.

Another way of altering the steady beat is the use of mixed meter, introduced mainly by Piazzolla and Beytelmann. In many of Beytelmann's works, meter is not used as in traditional tango, but rather results from the organization of pitches, rhythms, accents and articulations. In addition, through emphasizing, counteracting, "modulating" or blurring the steady pacing he plays with the listener's perception of the beat. In this way, Beytelmann makes his music more complex and presents an alternative to the binary organization (*S-W*)³¹⁰ that is a core trait of tango.

In the analyses included in this dissertation, many other features related to rhythm and meter were found. These include complementary rhythmical layers, the use of non-pitched *marcato*s, of homorhythmical blocks and of two-bar *ostinatos* to accompany the main textural layer. Regarding the bass lines in the *marcato*s, the traditional profile is based on the structural notes of the harmony, with or without ornamentation. Piazzolla's innovation can be seen in the way he simplifies the bass line's profile by featuring repeated pitches or fewer pitches than usual. In addition, his typical descending quarter-notes in half- or whole-steps give a new profile to the typical tango bass line. In Beytelmann's music, the use of bass lines featuring notes alien to the chords in the given harmony provides regularly tonal ambiguities. Lastly, in many pieces the accented notes in the piano left hand are thickened through the addition of extra notes, generally forming perfect fifths.

³¹⁰ See The Fundamentals.

Regarding the relationship between melody and accompaniment

The rhythmical base can either support or work against continuity in a given section. The interruption of the accompaniment may be used to highlight segmentation and feature contrasts, while stable marcatos may be used as a strong foundation upon which the main melodic lines can be built in a varied way. The conflicting nature of tango music can be further emphasized through the use of a syncopated theme over a downbeat marcato or the use of a theme played on the downbeat over a syncopated marcato. The resulting rhythmical-accentual contrast is typical of the genre and helps to enliven the pieces and differentiate the textural layers. The combination of strongly articulated ostinatos and melodic solos is a typical feature of Piazzolla's music, while in Beytelmann's the de-contextualization of tango materials helps to suppress the hierarchy between layers. Another feature (also connected with orchestration) regarding the hierarchical relationship between the melody and the accompaniment is the ambiguity that is generated when background and foreground are interchanged. This technique was found in pieces by all four musicians.

Regarding textural features

As mentioned earlier, the basic texture of tango music consists of melody and accompaniment. Throughout the development of this musical language the texture has become increasingly polyphonic and various contrapuntal features have been introduced. These polyphonic features may include the use of superimposed melodic lines or differentiated textural layers presenting contrasting materials. The basic textural organization is thus a melody, a ripieno (which can include a variety of elements and countermelodies) and a rhythmical base. Within these three main textural layers many combinations are possible and are effectively used in the common practice of tango. The use of imitative passages has further enriched the presence of polyphony, and all four composers/musicians have systematically used contrary motion within layers or between different layers to enhance their pieces. Beytelmann's systematic use of polyphonic passages and of a wide variety of textures gives his music a much more complex structure, more connected to so-called Western art music than to the tango tradition. In many of his pieces, the alternation between these various textures has a formal role. Lastly, he uses contrapuntal motion to organize changes in instrumentation and register. This helps to create smooth transitions between different elements and leads to a kind of fluency that strongly contrasts with the sudden changes that are so typical in traditional tango music.

Regarding orchestration

The use of orchestration represents yet another important means to generate diversity and contrast. For this reason, it is common practice to frequently vary the orchestration and to explore many instrumental combinations and alter the timbre. The melodic lines, countermelodies and accompaniment are oftentimes divided amongst different instruments or textural layers (Pugliese being progressive for his era in this respect and Piazzolla being surprisingly more conservative). In addition, discontinuous musical fragments played by different instruments can be perceived as a single, timbrally fragmented melodic line. The resulting discontinuity – unusual in

early tangos, in which phrases, semi-phrases and motives were generally stated by a single instrument or section – is compensated for by a variety of processes that play a more unifying role. These may include gradual changes in dynamics, register, tessitura, rhythms and articulations. Orchestration is thus inextricably linked to composition and arrangement, and represents one of the main developments within tango music. It also represents a reason why this music needed to be notated. Another new development in orchestration is the sequential process of instrumentation (in this dissertation referred to as an increase or reduction in instrumental density by accumulation or dispersal), which strongly contrasts with the modification of instrumentation in blocks that is so typical in traditional tango.

Other features studied are more related to each musician's style. In Pugliese's music, orchestration is varied on a frequent basis and solos never exceed a whole phrase. Among his musicians there is no dominant instrument, although the piano is the one from which Pugliese conducts the orchestra. In Salgán and Piazzolla's music there is instead a much more clear focus on certain specific instruments, as both musicians composed and arranged in a way that gave them soloistic roles. In the case of Salgán, the role of the piano concertante is defined by the continuous interjections of his instrument in countermelodies, connecting passages, solos, accompaniments and *marcatos*. In the case of Piazzolla, his soloistic role on the bandoneon is demonstrated through extended solos and virtuosic passages, as he composed and arranged music partly based on his drive to perform on stage. Throughout the oeuvre of Salgán, Piazzolla and Beytelmann – mainly due to the fact that they also used smaller ensembles when compared with the former *orquestas típicas* – there is a gradual change towards what I define as the “ensemble of soloists”. More importance is given to each instrument and all of the instruments in the ensemble play solos and main lines. Piazzolla further emphasized this treatment of his ensembles (especially the quintet), as if he was inspired by the jazz bands he admired. From this approach stem many of his innovations in composition and orchestration: Piazzolla writes with the quintet's musicians in mind and always highlights their virtues by means of tailor-made passages with which they can excel (this also related to the above-mentioned length of instrumental solos and the use of unvarying orchestration). Beytelmann also treats the ensemble as a group of soloists, but generally does not base his compositions on his musicians' strengths. Rather, he focuses on the ideas he is trying to convey. In this respect, Beytelmann's compositional process usually begins with a novel concept, which somehow relates to materials, techniques or devices to use. Lastly, new instrumental combinations were introduced by the maestros, such as the guitar-piano duo by Salgán and the drums, vibraphone and electric guitar in Piazzolla's ensembles, whilst Beytelmann puts together atypical ensembles.

Regarding timbral and percussive effects

Timbral and percussive effects that are typical for tango are used by all the musicians studied, as these are a main trait of tango music. These effects are used to emphasize heavily articulated passages, to create contrast and variation and to enliven the music. Contrasts occur at both a harmonic level (as these effects momentarily suspend the use of pitch) and at a rhythmical level (as they usually do not align with the meter). A full description of the effects found in the analyses is included in the Glossary.

Regarding variation techniques

Variation techniques are used to create contrast and segmentation. They are also necessary in order to compose entire pieces from the typical two-theme formal structure of tangos. Most tango features originate from the need to make variations on the constituent elements of this musical language, and the techniques developed in order to do so are many. This clearly shows the long-standing creativity of tango musicians, and their intuitive, brilliant approach to music.

As regards variation techniques, in all of the analyses the use of parametric instability-stability (keeping one parameter stable while other parameters are modified) is foremost a lesson of balance. Among the techniques found, many are connected to the alteration of the steady beat, hence the various ways of phrasing and the introduction of contrasting rhythmical patterns already described. Other variation techniques focus on the melody. Motives' repetitions can be varied in many ways, through extension, compression, inversion, retrograde, permutation, imitation, diminution, augmentation, instrumentation, register, dynamics, rhythm, profile, modulation or transposition. Piazzolla, for example, presents motives whose sequence of transpositions mirrors the typical tango ornament of a turn. Some materials can be freely developed rather than repeated, as in Beytelmann's progressive variations. Melodic lines may also be varied through instrumentation (making them thicker or thinner) and texture (making them homophonic or polyphonic), in either gradual or abrupt manners.

In addition, in the arrangements analysed, the aspects that were traditionally subject of transformation (rhythm, articulation, instrumentation and phrasing) were further expanded to include character, phrase-length, melodic profile of the theme, tonality and formal structure. Pugliese even applies characteristic features of a section to other segments in order to create variation, and superimposes different formal sections. In recapitulative sections, Salgán presents a set of compelling variation techniques based on the shift, omission or combination of notes from the theme in order to alter rhythmical and melodic predictability, thwarting the listeners' expectations. Another technique used by Salgán in recapitulative sections (and a main trait of his style) is the addition of countermelodies, either contrasting or similar to the main theme. In some pieces by Salgán and Beytelmann, recapitulative sections are generated through thematic materials that evoke the original theme without presenting it in full, demonstrating yet another innovative approach to the standard practice. Finally, Piazzolla presents a way of varying repetitive motives through a process of "thematization".

Regarding the use of register

This aspect constitutes yet another way of creating diversity and contrast. All registers available are thoroughly used in varied and repeatedly changing combinations. Registral changes and the frequent compression and expansion of the tessitura give tango music one of its characteristic traits. A primary feature of Salgán's piano playing, for example, is the use of its highest register, which contributes to his light and syncopated style. Pugliese, instead, remains in the lower register of the keyboard in order to support his heavy, deep musical language. Piazzolla either varies or

maintains a restricted tessitura throughout an entire section or piece, while Beytelmann instead affirms the traditional use of register, even in unusual instrumental combinations. He develops this further, now as an independent parameter that can reinforce or counteract formal segmentation, or that can occur as a thematic element. Register may be also used to discern thematic from accompanimental layers. This kind of registral arrangement is used mainly in small ensembles to imitate the use of different registral sectors within the *orquesta típica*.

Regarding performance techniques

Most of the above-mentioned features are closely related to tango interpretation, one of its main traits being the use of a steady rhythmical base to allow the other instruments to phrase freely. Phrasing allows the musician to emphatically avoid the rigidity of the steady beat (particularly the downbeat) by ‘floating’ over it rather than aligning with it. Therefore, tango musicians play phrase-by-phrase, guided more by the musical flow of the melodic lines than by the supporting rhythmical base. Phrasing also includes the use of ornaments and the free interpretation of many features of the melodic line’s rhythm and profile, its register, dynamics and articulation. In Piazzolla and Beytelmann’s music, solos include features from diverse forms of Western art music and jazz, which constituted an innovation in the genre. In rhythmical sections, syncopated accents are used to fight against the beat, creating a wide range of rhythmical figures and resulting in a complex musical surface. The extreme dynamic difference with which accented and non-accented elements are played is another main trait of tango performance. Accented elements are often given a strong, percussive attack, while non-accented elements are played short and light, many times almost imperceptible.

