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

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Summary

In this dissertation I dig into the constituent elements of River Plate tango in order to decode how specific musical materials were organized and combined by four outstanding musicians: Osvaldo Pugliese (1905-1995), Horacio Salgán (b. 1916), Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) and Gustavo Beytelmann (b. 1945). For this purpose, apart from scrutinizing the scarce literature available on the subject, I have analysed a select number of representative pieces through a study of their scores and recordings. Special attention has been paid to the perception of phenomena beyond the scores, which are often incongruous with what is heard. The multiple perspectives that were used for structural analyses seek to go beyond partial approaches that do not address works in a comprehensive way. This gave me the opportunity for a close observation of many issues with the aim of discovering and decoding the elements, techniques and procedures they were based on and that defined the stylistic traits of their composers. I have classified the main characteristics and innovative peculiarities of those pieces by taking into consideration formal, textural, harmonic and melodic features, rhythm and meter, techniques of variation, orchestration and segmentation, timbral and percussive effects, the use of register, performance techniques, and the relationship between the main lines and the diverse accompanimental archetypes. The same parameters and techniques were observed throughout all the pieces, taking into account perceptive and performative issues. This part of the work has led to the definition of certain artistic processes and innovations within the genre, theoretical foundations for such processes, and, in all, a deeper understanding of the art of creating tango music, in addition to an overall, chronological view of its development and techniques. The articulation of this (partly) embodied knowledge has resulted in an original contribution to the field, providing new insights with which both I and the greater artistic community can enrich our skills in arranging, composing and performing tango music.

In addition, this dissertation results from my engagement in complementary activities such as consulting tango and non-tango musicians that contributed indispensable insight and information for my research. Working together with researchers and Western art music composers who were not familiar with tango language was also essential to define a vocabulary and to transform ideas and intuitions into clear and objective explanations and conceptualizations. This also helped me to discover musical possibilities outside the genre that I could combine with traditional tango elements, and led me to consolidate my views and taste through experimenting with different kinds of materials and techniques alien to the tango tradition.

Last but not least, the formulation of hypothesis and conclusions, and the translation of the findings into my own production through empiric methods and experimentation were executed alongside the analytical part of the work. The continuous exchange between the practical and theoretical aspects of this research project was fundamental, always strengthening and feeding back each other. I have successfully integrated many of the findings into my own music, be it compositional or performative.