

**ÁSTOR PIAZZOLLA** (1921–1992) was the foremost composer and ambassador of tango music, who carried the signature sound of Argentina to clubs and concert halls around the world. Born in Argentina, Piazzolla lived in New York for 13 years from 1924 until 1937, where he tuned into the vibrant jazz scene and bandleaders such as Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway. At age 12, he received his first bandoneon (a type of button accordion that is the principal voice of tango), and began playing music from the classical repertoire. Soon after his family returned to Argentina in 1937, Piazzolla joined the popular tango orchestra of Anibal Troilo and –while still a teenager – established himself as a talented bandoneon player and arranger. In Argentina, Piazzolla continued to study classical music, too, with the composer Alberto Ginastera and others. In 1954, Piazzolla's composition "Buenos Aires" won him a scholarship to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, who encouraged him to find his own voice by tapping into his passion for tango. Back in Argentina in the late 1950s, Piazzolla did just that, laying the groundwork for what became known as *tango nuevo* – new tango. In 1960 he formed his seminal group Quinteto Tango Nuevo, featuring bandoneon alongside violin, guitar, piano, and bass. In the ensuing years Piazzolla's music increasingly used dissonance, metrical shifts, counterpoint, and other techniques inspired by modern classical composition and jazz orchestras. In Argentina, where tango is a source of national pride and identity, some tango purists were incensed by these radical departures from tradition, and in the late 1960s even Argentina's military government criticized Piazzolla for being too avant-garde. Piazzolla left behind a huge body of music – more than 3000 works. His music is so well-known, that he is sought out by every kind of accomplished musician, from such disparate realms as jazz, classical music, opera and rock and roll. Piazzolla transported the tango from the dance clubs to the concert halls of the world.

*Michelangelo '70*, which references the name of a Buenos Aires cafe where the composer's quintet performed in the 70s, is an intriguing piece that is centered on a repeated three-note theme, composed as a sort of musical exercise.

*Invierno Porteño* (Buenos Aires Winter) is part of the *Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* (The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires). The adjective *porteño*, referring to those born in Buenos Aires, gives an impression of the four seasons in Buenos Aires. Piazzolla pays homage to the tango of Buenos Aires as well as the "serious" music of the great Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, whose influence is most obvious in the closing bars of *Invierno porteño*,

*Revirado* (Twisted), composed in 1963 for Piazzolla's Quinteto Nuevo Tango, exhibits the counterpoint with which Piazzolla was enriching the traditional dance form during those years. It is a piece evoking the memory of Edith Piaf.

*Adiós Nonino* (Farewell, Nonino) was written in New York in October 1959 in memory of his father, Vicente "Nonino" Piazzolla, a few days after the father's death. The piece has proven to be one of Piazzolla's most well known and popular compositions, and has been recorded many times in many various arrangements and instrumentations.

*Primavera Porteña* (Buenos Aires Spring) was composed by Piazzolla in 1970. It starts with a fugue and stands out with its strong elements of counterpoint. As in the rest of the “Buenos Aires Seasons”, this movement’s title is general enough to avoid suggesting any specific visual images. The result is purely abstract music, passionate, dark, romantic, rhythmically complex and imbued with the spirit of tango.

*S.V.P. (S’il Vous Plait)* was one of the first tangos composed by Astor Piazzolla, while he studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. While not yet “tango nuevo”, its charm and melancholic mood seduce the listener with bittersweet tenderness.

*Decarisimo* was written as a Thank You note to Julio De Caro, a tango innovator, who paid homage to Piazzolla by writing a tango bearing Piazzolla’s name. Piazzolla respected and appreciated De Caro, whose ideas had guided and inspired him.

*Otoño Porteño* (Buenos Aires Autumn) starts with “*chicharra*” (cicada), Piazzolla's trademark effect, a raspy, cricket-like sound, generated when the bow is scraped over the wrapping of the string. Two versions of an energetic theme surround a central, reflective version. The music is quintessential Piazzolla: reflecting the life and soul of his native Buenos Aires.

*Escualo* (Shark), composed in 1979 for the famous tango violinist Fernando Suarez Paz, refers to shark-fishing, Piazzolla’s favorite pastime while vacationing in Punta del Este, Uruguay. This work is one of the most rhythmically challenging among Piazzolla’s compositions, and is famously known as the most difficult to perform on the violin.