

*Programme*

# T A N G O



*Carlos Gardel*

*December 19th 2008*

## TANGO

Tango, the musical genre and its dance that originated in the River Plate (Buenos Aires and Montevideo) around the end of the 19th century. Later spread to Europe, Japan and the rest of the world. The millions of immigrants that in less than a hundred years arrived in the River Plate area from the end of the 19th century up to the 1940's changed the character of the country and also gave rise to the most original creation of that culture: the tango. Sometimes associated to a sentiment of sadness and resentment of the immigrant the music has kept a feeling of unabashed passion.

This dance many times analysed, discussed, reviled, reproved, ridiculed and praised went through many

style changes during its existence and it is regarded today as the song of Buenos Aires city. It's been hailed as the most romantic, erotic and skilled of the popular dances accessible to most people and has become an important component of the cultural identity of many Southamericans.

Though tango started in the suburbs and it was associated to low life, soon it was taken to Paris where had a great impact and was quickly adopted by the upper classes

Thanks to composers like Piazzolla (a controversial figure for many tango lovers) who acquired world renown, tango has reached today very large audiences and many musicians from Ma Yoyo, to Plácido Domingo and Gidon Kremer have jumped onto the bandwagon of tango. But all this has changed somehow its original character, it has softened its melodramatic character and flattened many of its rough edges.

Today Ricardo Canzio (piano), Liang Wenpin (erhu) and Alvin Cheng (bandoneón) bring you tango in a more traditional form with its unexpected rhythms, its mordents and its biting dissonances, its loose phrasing on a steady rhythm.

Early tango was played with guitar, flute and violin, later with the advent of the tango orchestras called *orquesta típica* the piano was introduced. The bandoneón, an instrument of German origin came in the 1920's and gave its characteristic timbre and emotional impact to the genre. The erhu in this case replaces the violin and gives a particular local color to the performance and allows a strong emotional expression without detriment to the essence of the genre.

Today tango groups play three main genres, tango itself, waltzes and milonga a faster and rhythmic genre with affinities with Argentinian folk milonga and all three genres are represented in today's programme.

Enjoy it! And dance if you feel like.

## The Programme

### **La casita de mis viejos** (My Parents House) Juan Carlos Cobián & Enrique Cadícamo

A sophisticated tango, representative of the style of the 1950's. Composed by one of the author of many harmonically complex tangos. It offers ample scope for a modern elaborate harmonic treatment. Most tangos have lyrics and this is no exception although there is no singer today. Cadícamo was a great tango poet and his words for this song deal with an archetypal theme. The man who leaves his surroundings and comes back decades later to be recognized only by his voice by the old servant. [Remember Ulysses in the Odyssey was recognized only by his dog on his return]

### **Danzarín** (Dancer) Julián Plaza

A tango that possesses all the stylistic elements of the genre. A highly rhythmic section with clashing timbres and a strongly contrasting romantic section in a minor key with a virtuosistic variation at the end.

### **Sur** (South) Anibal Troilo

A reference to the southern suburbs of Buenos Aires, a working class area in the early 20th century and the place where tango was mostly danced. A classic composed by Troilo hailed as perhaps as the most representative figure in the history of recent tango.

## Romance de Barrio (Suburban Romance) *waltz*

Anibal Troilo & Homero Manzi

Waltzes as played by tango groups tend to be rather simple and non dramatic as opposed to the feelings engendered by tango. The straightforward and appealing melody has made of this a very popular song.

## Rodriguez Peña (named after a place)

Vicente Greco

A tango in the old guard style with a simple style and the appeal of earlier uncomplicated times. Greco was one of the best composers of the old guard tango style before the advent of Gardel and the tango-song (*tango canción*)

## Volver (Coming back)

Carlos Gardel & Alfredo Lepera

A classic of the new era of tango the tango-song invented by Carlos Gardel, the epitome of tango singing, in the 1920's. He was who created the way of singing tango, in which we find an amazing blend of technique and sensitivity which would pave the way for future generations of tango players and composers. This tango has been recently featured in a Spanish film by the same name and it is a jewel of elaborated form and sensitive melody.

## La Cumparsita

Gerardo Matos Rodriguez

The classic of classics. The tango most played all over the world. You probably heard it.

## El porteño *milonga*

Angel Villoldo

Villoldo was the composer of another of the most famous tangos: *El choclo*. Here we have a milonga in the typical old style with its *canyengue* feeling with a modern arrangement especially written for this group. Canyengue refers to a strutting, brazen, slightly impertinent demeanor.