

Piazzolla

PARA EL ÁNGEL

Piano Music

Jeroen van Veen *piano*

Astor Piazzolla 1921-1992

Para el Ángel

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|------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|------|
| Ángel | | Two Tango Preludes (1987) | | 22. Adiós Nonino, | | Six Tangos (1974) | |
| 1. Milonga Del Ángel (1962) | 3'49 | 12. Leijia's Game, Tango | 4'39 | Tango Rhapsody (1959) | 10'55 | 29. Meditango | 5'37 |
| 2. La Muerte Del Ángel (1962) | 2'10 | 13. Flora's Game, Milonga | 8'46 | 23. Oblivion (1982) | 4'03 | 30. Undertango | 4'15 |
| 3. Resurrección Del Ángel (1965) | 4'57 | | | 24. Overture (1974) | 5'16 | 31. Violentango | 4'19 |
| 4 Canciones Porteñas (1965) | | 14. El Viaje (1974) | 4'43 | 25. Mumuki (1984) | 8'05 | 32. Amelitango | 4'13 |
| 4. Alguien le dice al Tango | 2'09 | 15. Milonga (1974) | 2'02 | 26. Street Tango (1988) | 4'34 | 33. Novitango | 3'47 |
| 5. Jacinto Chiclana | 3'14 | 16. Vuelvo al sur (1972) | 4'19 | 27. Milonga for Three (1988) | 6'29 | 34. Tristango | 7'18 |
| 6. El Titere | 2'21 | 17. Chiquilin de Bachin (1969) | 3'40 | 28. Ausencias (1975) | 4'36 | | |
| 7. A Don Nicanor Paredes | 3'31 | 18. Michelangelo 70 (1969) | 3'17 | | | 35. Libertango (1974) | 3'18 |
| Estaciones | | Suite Para Piano Op.2 (1943) | | | | | |
| 8. Primavera Porteña (1970) | 4'39 | 19. Preludio | 2'01 | | | | |
| 9. Verano Porteño (1965) | 4'59 | 20. Siciliana | 3'18 | | | | |
| 10. Otono Porteño (1969) | 4'24 | 21. Toccata | 2'28 | | | | |
| 11. Invierno Porteño (1969) | 3'44 | | | | | | |

Jeroen van Veen *piano*

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Astor Piazzolla 11-3-1921 (Mar del Plata, Argentina) 4-7-1992 (Buenos Aires)

In 2021 it will be exactly 100 years ago that Astor Piazzolla was born, a good reason to make a double album with works for piano. Piazzolla was born in Mar del Plata, Argentina as a child of Italian immigrants. In 1925 Astor and his family moved to New York. His parents worked around the clock and Astor had to learn to take care of himself. When at home, his father played him records with tango orchestras and he was exposed to classical- and jazz music at an early age. Piazzolla started playing the bandoneon in 1929, 8 years old. In 1932 he composed his first tango 'La Catiga'. The next year he took music lesson from Bela Wilda, a Hungarian classical pianist who was a student of Sergei Rachmaninoff. It was this teacher who taught Piazzolla to play Bach on the bandoneon. This influence is audible in many pieces, his love for the fugue, sequences and counterpoint.

After meeting Carlos Gardel (1890-1935), one of the prominent figures in the history of tango, Piazzolla was asked to play bandoneon on his tour. Unfortunately, his father forbids him to join the tour because of his young age. Actually, this decision saved his life; on the tour of 1935 Gardel and his entire orchestra were killed in a tragic plane crash. The Ángel of the bandoneon saved him so to speak!

When Piazzolla turned 17 he moved to Buenos Aires to play in the orchestra of the bandoneonist Anibal Troilo; as a replacement bandoneonist, arranger and pianist when needed. In 1941 he made enough money to get lessons from composer Alberto Ginastera. Arthur Rubenstein, the famous pianist who was living in Buenos Aires recommended Astor Piazzolla to study with Ginastera. They worked mainly on works by Stravinsky, Bartók, Ravel and Bach. If you listen to 'Suite Para Piano, opus 2' (1943) you will hear the influences. More and more Piazzolla wanted to become a composer and forget his roots, the tango. Piazzolla added two bandoneons in his orchestral work "Buenos Aires Symphony in Three Movements" which led to a fight among the members of the audience at the premiere. Despite the hassle Piazzolla won a grant from the French government to study in Paris with the legendary composition

teacher Nadia Boulanger at the conservatory. A long list of famous composers was in here classroom: Aaron Copland, Philip Glass, Michel Legrand, Darius Milhaud to name a few. In here lessons Piazzolla tried to forget his tango, trying to compose classical music. But when he played his tango 'Triunfal' for her, she made the lifechanging comment; Astor; "all your classical pieces are well written, but the true Piazzolla sound is here, never leave him behind".

After this advice Piazzolla returned to Argentina and started to dedicate himself to composing. Based on the Tango spirit he started mixing other musical genres. In addition, he started performing bandoneon standing instead of the usual sitting position. His 'Tango Nuevo' was criticized by the orthodox Tango composers and performers, but Piazzolla kept experimenting with new forms and music styles.

Between 1958 and 1960 he worked in the US. When his father passed away, he composed his famous work *Adiós Nonino* (1959). After having his first heart attack in 1973 he moved to Italy to start a quieter life. It was there when he composed his famous *Libertango* and his 6 Tangos, *Meditango*, *Undertango*, *Violentango*, *Amelitango*, *Novitango* and *Tristango* (1974). In this period, he founded the group Conjunto Electrónico, an octet with bandoneon, piano, organ, guitar, electric bass guitar, drums, synthesizer and violin. After this composing and arranging followed his most productive years of playing around the world with his own group and with many leading conductors and orchestras. He made many friends worldwide and it was a shock when he passed away in 1992 after being in coma for two years due to a stroke. His oeuvre counts more than 1000 compositions in many different combinations and styles; they have one thing in common, they all carry the typical Argentinian style.

From the first time I heard his music, I felt attracted to it; the rhythm, the melodic value, the atmosphere, it is hard to describe but it felt like a natural attraction. The kind of feeling that the music is part of your music memory; it was already there. The first time I heard *Libertango*, the ostinato rhythm, drive and melody, I right away heard the love for Bach and something new; the Tango. Up to then I only played the Tango by Stravinsky and Albéniz. Later on when I was studying Milhaud and Glass the name Boulanger came up. And I was surprised to see the name of Piazzolla in the list of students. That's when I delved into his oeuvre. Being a pianist with a strong affinity for piano duo; I heard the potential for versions on two pianos, but at that time there were no arrangements and I focused on other music; the repetitive 'minimal' music. At some point I did arrange and played some of his works in concerts; but not for long. The *6 Tangos* include so much material that even two pianos is not enough fingers to play them all! On this recording I did multitrack myself punching in all the extra lines. The result is occasionally overwhelming.

In 2002, being a Dutch citizen, I watched the wedding of Prince Willem-Alexander, and Princess Máxima Zorreguieta. One of the pieces that was played during the wedding was *Adiós Nonino* on bandoneon by Carel Kraayenhof. A wonderful moment of the power of music and how it effects people. It was only in 2006 that I played my arranged *6 Tangos* once with Sandra in Amsterdam, in the Odeon Theater. In 2009 I recorded and released some music by Piazzolla on an album 'Tangomania'. A small and forgotten release, but my opportunity to play and record this beautiful music. Two years ago, I got a phone call from my booking agency, if I would be interested to join a trio with Carel Kraayenhof and Leoni Jansen. Since then, a close friendship was established with both musicians; and Carel and I play a lot together, but more classical pieces and arrangements. In the near future we will release an album including compositions by Piazzolla.

When planning the new releases, I made a schedule with Brilliant Classics for the next year; at some point I asked: but what are you releasing with the 100th anniversary of Piazzolla? That's when I came up with the idea to release a new album dedicated to

this brilliant composer. But what to select and record out of this gigantic repertoire? I picked a selection of known and unknown compositions from *Op.2* (1943) until *Street Tango* (1988). Original piano, arranged for piano, the piano has to simulate the band, the percussion, the drive, the melody and the diversity in moods and styles. The title of this album is named after the three pieces called *Ángel*. Maybe with a wink to the Ángel who guarded over Piazzolla when his father forbade him to tour with Gardel.

Experimenting with new sounds and styles: If you listen to *Michelangelo '70* (1969) original version you will hear Violin player Fernando Suárez Paz. He came from a classical background and played many of the soulful melodies Piazzolla wrote, such as *Milonga Del Ángel*. His specialty was the ability to produce percussive effects, an essential part of the tango. These effects are called 'yeites' and each one is named after the sound it aims to produce, such as cicada, rain drop, broom, whip and siren.

Another element was contributed by Horacio Malvicino who played on electric guitar and included the improvisational jazz aesthetic to Piazzolla's compositions. You can hear a good example of that at the beginning of *Mumuki* (1984) from *Tango: Zero Hour*. For many years the most controversial aspect of the 'Nuevo Tango' was the improvisational freedom given to each of the musicians, a concept completely foreign to the old tradition of the style. It is this element that is also used in the style I perform mostly as a performing artist; the improvisation element in repetitive and minimal music such as Ten Holt, Riley. In a way I think Piazzolla's 'Tango Nuevo' is the Renaissance of the Tango

The tango, a form of music, song, and dance, as well as a sensibility, a way of being in the world, was born in Argentina. But the Tango derives from the Cuban habanera and contradanza. There are three types of tango; tango-milonga, strongly rhythmic, instrumental and quite fast, the tango-canción, vocal and sentimental and tango-romanza, which is either vocal or instrumental, very lyrical with a clearly defined melodic element. But on this album, you will also hear some earlier pieces such as the *Suite for Piano*, Op.2. The love for the French style is obvious audible in this suite with three movements. Elements from the music of Ravel, Debussy are there in form,



*Rippen Grand Piano built of aluminium. This instrument was often called: the piano on high heels!
(Photo and piano belong to the Jeroen van Veen collection)*

sound and piano technique. The first time I heard the *Siciliana* I couldn't believe it was written by Piazzolla!

On this album I recorded the compositions merely for piano solo. Although most of the score show more lines than the regular two, one for the right hand and one for the left hand. The 6 *Tangos* (1974) are a good example of this kind of work. At some point it feels like I'm trying to play eight or more lines on one piano. When performing live I should decide what to play, and what not, but here I decided

to record them all. A multi layered version of the pieces is the result. Some other works such as the Tango Rhapsody *Adiós Nonino* play around the themes with many virtuoso ornaments. *Oblivion* (1982) is a beautiful melody with an additional rhythm.

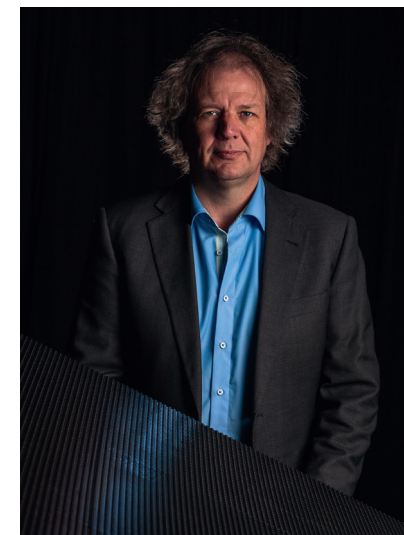
El Viaje (1974), *Milonga* (1974), *Ouverture* (1974), *Mumuki* (1984), *Street Tango* (1988), *Milonga for Three* (1988) and *Ausencias* (1974) appeared in two books: *El Viaje* and *Vuelvo al sur*. The selection was based upon the diversity in character of the works or the tonal sequence of the compositions. The love for a warm sound and deep bases are in almost all the works. Enjoy the beautiful music of Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)!!

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Jeroen van Veen

Jeroen Van Veen (1969) started playing the piano at the age of 7. He studied at the Utrecht Conservatory with Alwin Bär and Håkon Austbø. In 1993 he passed the Performing Artists' Exam. Van Veen has played with orchestras conducted by Howard Williams (Adams), Peter Eötvös (Zimmermann), Neal Stulberg (Mozart & Bartok) and Robert Craft (Stravinsky). He has played recitals in Europe, Russia, Canada & the USA. Van Veen attended master classes with Claude Helffer, Roberto Szidon, Ivan Klánsky and Leonid Hambro. He was invited to several festivals: Reder Piano Festival (1988), Festival der Künsten in Bad Gleichenberg (1992), Wien Modern (1993), Holland Dance Festival (1998, 2010) Lek Art Festival (1996-2009).

Van Veen recorded for major Radio- and Television companies. In 1992, Van Veen recorded his first album as Piano duo Van Veen. In 1995 Piano duo Van Veen made their debut in the United States. They were prize-winners in the prestigious 4th International Murray Dranoff Two Piano Competition in Miami, Florida. After this achievement they toured the United States and Canada many times. The documentary "Two Pianos One Passion" (nominated with an Emmy Award 1996) portrays them as a duo. In 2016 Van Veen was awarded with the NPO Radio 4 2016 Award, for his efforts and promotion of classical music beyond the concert halls. His lay-down



(ligconcert) concerts were praised as an example how classical music can attract new audiences.

The various compositions by Van Veen may be described as Minimal Music with different faces, Crossovers to Jazz, Blues, Soundscape, Avant-Garde, Techno, Trance and Pop Music. His Minimal Preludes for piano, and his NLXL are some of his most played pieces worldwide. His latest Minimal Piano Concerto Continuum was a great success. In 2015 he premiered his Incanto nr 2 in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw with Sandra van Veen.

Currently Mr. Van Veen is director of Van Veen Productions, Chairman of the Simeon ten Holt Foundation, Pianomania Foundation and artistic director of several music festivals. He is also active as Overseas Artistic Director in the Murray Dranoff Two Piano Competition based in Miami. Over the last 25 years Van Veen recorded more than 186 albums and 5 DVD's, mostly for Brilliant Classics. His dicography includes Adams, Einaudi, Glass, JacobTV, Minimal Piano Collections, Nietzsche, Nyman, Pärt, Reich, Riley, Satie, Sakamoto, Stravinsky, Tiersen, Ten Holt, Van Veen, Yiruma and many others.

Van Veen is also praised for his productivity some say, 'the man who records faster than his shadow'.

"Dutch pianist and composer, Jeroen van Veen, the leading exponent of minimalism today", Alan Swanson (Fanfare)

"Jeroen van Veen has for many years been a powerhouse in the piano world of the Netherlands and beyond", Dominy Clements (Musicweb-International)

"The Maximal Minimalist Missionary", Raymond Tuttle (Fanfare)



*Bechstein straight strung grand piano, 2.40m from 1870. On this model Liszt's Sonata was premiered.
(Photo and piano belong to the Jeroen van Veen collection)*

Thanks to Piano Mania

This Album is dedicated to Leen den Otter