

History

At the end of the 19th century, when Buenos Aires was expanding over the deserted "Pampa", a new sound and expression was born. Borrowing music and movement from Central America, the Spanish "Tango Andaluz", Africa, and the Milongas, the traveling singers (payadores) performing through out the countryside; this mixture of European and African themes and emotions brought by the immigrants, exemplified the beginning of a new music--"TANGO".

Although now considered a dance of glamor, elegance, and sophistication by society, Tango found it's first life in the rough heart of Argentina and Uruguay. People streaming to the new world at the turn of the century, and the newly dispossessed gauchos found themselves in a strange land, and to offset their rootlessness, their loss of home, they sought companionship in the bordellos and cafes of Buenos Aires. Starting as a dance expressing life's dark side, Tango, the breath of Buenos Aires, was born in the slums, yet today, reigns world wide. It achieved its success not because it portrayed the bizarre, but because it told and still tells the truth.

As with any artistic expression, the Tango, symbolizes much that is basic in life, the difficulty of love, the struggle to survive, to fight in a hard land. In groups consisting of a flute, guitar, violin, and an exotic instrument of German origin called El Bandoneon, early musicians began playing the Tango intuitively--it expressed their lives. In 1897, Rosendo Mendizabal introduced El Entrerriano, in 1903 Angel Villoldo composed El Choclo, and subsequently, the great names of the "Guardia Vieja" (Old Guard) started to appear such as Juan Maglio Pacho and Vicente Greco, who created the "Orquesta Tipica".

In 1913-1914 Tango was "in" all over the world. It's popularity spread to Paris society by wealthy expatriate Argentines. From there, it spread to England sowing the seeds for today's "International Tango", and later to the United States where Vernon & Irene Castle toned down its inherent sexuality to make it "acceptable." This became "American Ballroom Tango." Between 1915 and 1930, the musical innovations contributed by Eduardo Arolas, Agustin Bardi, Francisco Canaro and Roberto Firpo, among others, evolved Tango into two styles: Traditional and Evolutionist; which found its exponent in Julio and Francisco Caro. The singer's personality was incorporated by Carlos Gardel in 1917, when he sang the verses of Mi Noche Triste, (Pascual Contursi - Samuel Castriota), marking the beginning of the "story-like" lyrics of the Tango song. The female singers were represented by Azueena Maizani, Libertad Lamarque and Mercedes Simone. They earned the applause of audiences all over the American continent. As the music spread, adopted by more and more countries, it became more finished, more romantic and less threatening; it became the music of all Argentinians.

In the twenties, while there were unofficial Tango capitols in Paris, New York and Finland, a military coup at home suppressed a great many form of the people's expression. It was a decade until the government changed and the Tango resurfaced with a renewed life and social statement. But without a doubt, the Great Golden Era of Tango was the forties. A wealth of material from instrumentalists, poets, and interpreters, supported by "Radio", the cabarets and dance halls, created a wave of vocal and orchestral groups that spread around the world: Troilo-Florentino, D'Arienzo-Echague, Tanturi-Castillo, De Angelis-Martel, Pugliese-Moran. This period parallels our own "Big Band Era" with different bands developing their own unique styles in what came to be known as "Tango Moderno."

Subsequently, with the fall of Peron, and Rock and Roll sweeping all before it, youth gave their parent's Tango a recess. In a way this hiatus gave the Tango time to find a different language. No longer tied to the dance, it became music for listening, for the concert hall. But changing national fortunes ushered in new freedoms and two things gave Tango its rebirth. Astor Piazzolla, who imbued the Tango with a new creative energy--"Tango Nuevo"--imagination for a new generation. It started with Horacio Salgdon's A Fuego Lento, Mariano Mores', Tanguera, Eduardo Rovira's "Sonico". And secondly, "Tango Argentino," in 1983, premiering in Paris and Broadway, reintroduced Tango to the world. A success that grows to this day, a success that imparts life to Argentinian soul.