

DJ workshop

El Corte

Mayday DJ 2008

Contents

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Purpose
- 1.2 What to expect? – Feedback

Part 1: The art of DJ-ing

2 Circumstantial conditions

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Room
- 2.3 Lights
- 2.4 Dance floor
- 2.5 Time
- 2.6 Popularity
- 2.7 Special activities
- 2.8 Dancers & visitors
- 2.9 Conclusion & some cases
 - 2.9.1 Case 1: Salsa versus tango?
 - 2.9.2 Case 2: Chairs, chairs and ... more chairs!
 - 2.9.3 Case 3: A restless DJ
 - 2.9.4 Case 4: A milonga with many interruptions

3 Classification of music

- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2 Instrumental & vocal
- 3.3. Rhythmical & lyrical
- 3.4 Slow & fast
- 3.5 Energetic & melancholy
- 3.6 Regular & irregular
- 3.7 Old & modern
- 3.8 Conclusion
- 3.9 Where to find music
 - 3.9.1 Knowledge is everything
 - 3.9.2 Music shops
 - 3.9.3 Music lovers
 - 3.9.4 Being a DJ helps
 - 3.9.5 Accidental encounters

3.9.6 DJ Discussion forums

3.10 Music Labels

4 Structuring a milonga

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Tanda & tandacycle

4.3 Musical arc

4.4 Cortina

4.5 Specials

4.6 Bridge songs

4.7 Conclusion

5 Do & don't

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Don't lose your concentration

5.3 Try to "read" your audience

5.4 Know your music

5.5 Know your audience

5.6. Know your self

5.7 Perform in a dynamic way

5.8 Look for the 'common denominator'

5.9 Do not play too loud

5.10 Don't try to attract (too much) attention

5.11 Requests

5.12 Exchange experiences with other DJ's

5.13 Be your self

5.14 DJ's lifecycle

Part 2: About Tango

6 Candombe, the black roots of tango

6.1 Introduction

6.2 What is candombe?

6.3 The colonial era

6.4 Slaves, free blacks and their dance

6.5 Candombe and tango

7 History of tango

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 The prehistory
- 7.3 The birth of the tango
- 7.4 Intermezzo
- 7.5 La guardia vieja
- 7.6 Tango mania
- 7.7 La guardia nueva
- 7.8 La epoca de oro
- 7.9 Tango nuevo
- 7.10 La joven guardia
- 7.11 Neo tango

8 Evolution of tango music

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 In the beginning,
- 8.3 Tango between the World Wars
- 8.4 La epoca de oro
- 8.5 Intermezzo
- 8.6 Tango nuevo and what came next
- 8.7 Now. for something completely different

9 The voices of tango

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Cantores y cancionistas del tango
 - 9.2.1 Amor
 - 9.2.2 Beron
 - 9.2.3 Castillo
 - 9.2.4 Chanel
 - 9.2.5 Charlo
 - 9.2.6 Dante
 - 9.2.7 Falcon
 - 9.2.8 Fama
 - 9.2.9 Fiorentino
 - 9.2.10 Iriate
 - 9.2.11 Larroca
 - 9.2.12 Martel
 - 9.2.13 Merello

- 9.2.14 Omar
- 9.2.15 Podesta
- 9.2.16 Ray
- 9.2.17 Roldan
- 9.2.18 Rufino
- 9.2.19 Ruiz
- 9.2.20 Vargas
- 9.3 Observations and conclusions
 - 9.3.1 Francisco Canaro as a key figure
 - 9.3.2 Long careers
 - 9.3.3 Tango families
 - 9.3.4 Payador, estribillista, cantor
 - 9.3.5 Nicknames
 - 9.3.6 The new media: radio and movies
 - 9.3.7 The end of la epoca de oro
 - 9.3.8 Unsuccessful spin offs

10 The tango poets

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 The poets
 - 10.2.1 Eladia Blazquez
 - 10.2.2 Jorge Luis Borges
 - 10.2.3 Enrique Cadicamo
 - 10.3.4 Catulo Castillo
 - 10.3.4 Jose González Castillo
 - 10.3.5 Jose Maria Contursi
 - 10.3.6 Pascual Contursi
 - 10.3.7 Enrique Santos Discépolo
 - 10.3.8 Homero Expósito
 - 10.3.9 Horacio Ferrer
 - 10.3.10 Celedonio Flores,
 - 10.3.11 Alfredo Le Pera
 - 10.3.12 Homero Manzi
 - 10.3.13 Luis Rubistein

11 The evolution of tango dance

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 The evolution of tango dance

- 11.2.1 Music
- 11.2.3 Floor
- 11.2.4 Dancers
- 11.2.5 Politics
- 11.2.6 Economics
- 11.2.7 Media
- 11.2.8 Other dances
- 11.2.9 Learning to dance
- 11.2.10 Image of tango
- 11.2.11 Clothes, shoes and fashion
- 11.3 Conclusion & observations

Part 3 Miscellaneous

12 Sound engineering for DJ's

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Who?
- 12.3 What?
- 12.4 The mixing console
- 12.5 Getting sound
- 12.6 Fine adjustments

13 Laptop DJ-ing for tango DJ's

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Financial aspects
- 13.3 Software
- 13.4 Audio files
- 13.5 Hardware
- 13.6 Tips & tricks
- 13.7 Categorising
- 13.8 Troubleshooting
- 13.9 Conclusion & acknowledgements

14 Important orchestras

Alfredo de Angelis
Carlos Di Sarli
Juan D'Arienzo
Anibal Troilo

Oswaldo Pugliese
Francisco Canaro
Roberto Firpo
Miguel Calo
Ricardo Tanturi
Rodolfo Biagi
Angel D'Agostino

15 Tango timeline & trends

- 15.1 Tango timeline
- 15.2 Trends in tango music

16 Copyrights & DJ-ing

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 More info

17 Suggested reading & interesting sites

- 17.1. Techniques & general works
- 17.2. Tango DJ-ing
- 17.3 Tango as a social phenomenon

1 Introduction

For a number of years El Corte organizes a Mayday DJ workshop on the Sunday of the first May weekend. We felt a need to restructure and update the workshop. Of course we are very grateful for Ad van den Brekel's preparatory work, which did provide an extensive summary we used for so many years in previous DJ workshops.

1.1 Purpose

This workshop is primarily set up for people who want to start (or have recently started) DJ-ing in a milonga. We want to provide these DJ's with information, experiences and tools, that will make their jobs easier. Mind you, we don't want to impose a set of rules. Use them as a guideline or a framework to test your own notions. Everybody is free to go his or her own way. The only thing we will do is hand you some material to think about, which might open doors for you, which otherwise might have remained shut.

This set up will also make this workshop interesting for experienced DJ's, because there always is a chance of getting stuck in the groove and fall into a routine way of playing the same music in the same structure over and over again. Last but certainly not least, this workshop is also for people who are interested in tango music and/or want to give their local DJ feedback, but don't speak the lingo.

1.2 What to expect?

What are the subjects we will deal with in this workshop? In the first part we focus on the *art of DJ-ing*: circumstantial situations, classification of tango music, structuring a milonga and do and don't for tango DJ's.

In part 2 we will give you info on *tango as a social and cultural phenomenon*: candombe, history of tango(music), the tango poets, the tango singers and the evolution of the tango dance.

In the final part we treat some *miscellaneous* aspects of tango DJ-ing: sound engineering, laptop DJ-ing, copyrights, suggested reading and important orchestras.

1.3 Feedback

If you want to give us feedback, we would like that very much. You can send it to a.degraaff@hetnet.nl. Finally a word of thanks, because we could not have written it without the support and feedback of countless tango DJ's, tango teachers and dancers from all around the world.

Nijmegen,
May 2005 - April 2008

Arnoud de Graaff
Michiel Lombaers (sound engineering)
Eric Jeurissen (supervisor)

Part 1

The art of DJ-ing

2 Circumstantial conditions

2.1 Introduction

A DJ can make or break a milonga. However, even before starting to play music, there are some circumstantial conditions, a DJ should pay attention to. Success or failure depends on it. Not all these circumstantial conditions can be influenced. Some things you just have to accept and learn to live with. The conditions that do contribute to the success of a salon are:

2.2 Dance space

Is there a single hall to dance or are there more rooms? How is the dance floor situated? Where is your workspace and how is it situated?

To start with the last question: the DJ-s workspace is best situated close to the dance floor. The DJ has the best overview of the dance floor and that is the place where it is all happening. And also to feel the atmosphere on the dance floor, a place close by is logical.

To illustrate this, I quote Brwester and Broughton: “The truth about DJ-ing is that it is an emotional, improvisational art form and here the real scope for artistry lies. A good DJ isn’t just stringing records together, he is controlling the relationship between some music and hundreds of people. That’s why he has to see them. That’s why it couldn’t be a tape. That’s why it is a live performance. That’s why it is a creative art. Music is a hotline to people’s emotions, and what a DJ does is use this power constructively to generate enjoyment. Obviously his medium is music, but that’s just a means to an end. In a very real sense his primary medium is emotion; the DJ plays the feelings of a roomful of People.”¹

The music should be heard everywhere, but maybe not in all places as loud as on the dance floor.. Most dancehalls have a space for dancing and a space for lounging (drinking, talking, sitting down and meeting people to dance with and maybe a little flirting). If possible, the sound volume should be a little less in the lounge area than in the dance area. If people have to shout, the music is too loud.

¹ Brwester and Broughton, Last night a DJ saved my life, 2006:19.

The way a space is arranged with tables, chairs and other furniture is also essential for traffic and communication. See to it that there are not too many obstacles. It hinders people in mixing freely and may cause a salon to be static.

Tables and chairs should be situated at the side of the room in a way that makes it possible for people to mix freely. If this is not possible, you can try to create more dynamics in a static crowd by playing cortinas, specials or shorter series of tangos, vales and milongas.

Too many tables and chairs will also cause a milonga to become static. People come in and form groups and tend to stay in this group, which has a tendency to claim a table and chairs. If there are chairs or couches for approximately 40% of the dancers, this usually will be enough to prevent a milonga from becoming too static.

In some traditionally orientated milongas in Buenos Aires this is different. Every visitor is assigned a chair on entering the milonga. Contacts are realized via the game of the eyes and a nod of the head.²

2.3 Lights

Is it possible to adjust the lights to the atmosphere of the night, the music you are playing or an atmosphere you want to create or change? Are there colour lights?

The lights play an important role in creating an atmosphere. By playing with lights you can accentuate the music or trim down the effects that music has on an audience. Colour lights (if available) do enlarge these possibilities, but there is also downside to this; it may create a restless atmosphere if you use them too often.

Red lights usually symbolize romantic, even 'sexy' music like Fresedo's and Calo's slow lyrical tangos. However, too much and too long red lights subconsciously irritates your audience. This is the case with all types of colour lights: too long and too much is annoying. It is wise to

² Cabeco refers to the manner of asking each other to dance; that is not verbally but via the eyes and a nod with the head. In Buenos Aires cabeco is a natural phenomenon. Outside Argentina, in the western world it seems out of place, although some milonga organizers make brave but futile attempts to introduce cabeco in the western world.

vary colour lights regularly. Blue and green neon lights have a cool feeling, which you can use for tango nuevos and neotango's.

When there are no colour lights and/or dimmers, the possibilities of playing with lights are limited, but not impossible. You can decide to use or not to use a certain light. Or you can aim a lamp in another direction or move it to another place. Experiment with lights. DJ-ing is more than only playing some music. A DJ also has a responsibility for creating an atmosphere people enjoy. DJ-ing can be, just like pop concerts, a multi media experience.³

2.4 Dance floor

What is the quality of the floor? How big is the floor? Are there obstacles on the dance floor?

The roughness or texture of a floor will determine if it is fit for dancing or not (and it will also influence the way you dance too!). Most times the roughness of a floor can be treated, although not all dancehall owners are happy if you do. Always ask if it is allowed to make the floor more slippery (in case it is too strewn) or less slippery (when it is like an ice rink's floor).

Try to adapt the music to the state of the floor. Don't play 'big' or very fast music on a slippery floor, for it invites people to dance big or too fast and accidents are waiting to happen. The bigness of a floor is relative. If there are many dancers on a small floor it is crowded. In this case, play 'intimate' music. If there are few dancers, there is enough space and you can play 'big' music like Pugliese.

Some dancehalls have obstacles on and around the dance floor, which can't be removed. Think about a row of pillars. Obstacles can create tricky situations during a milonga. Sometimes it is wise to fill the space around or between obstacles with tables and chairs. If there is enough space to dance around the obstacle, no such actions are needed.

³ In progressive rock it is quite normal to use lights to enhance the effects of the music. This is certainly not a new concept. As early as 1911 the Russian composer Alexander Skryabin used "colored lights to flood the concert hall during the performance of his symphonic poem *Prometheus*." (Eduard Macan, *Rocking the classics. English progressive rock and counterculture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997:63).

2.5 Time

What is the duration of a milonga? When is the heart (high point) of the event? On what day of the week is it organized?

Most milongas have a fixed time of beginning and ending. So as a DJ you know how many time you have. You can make a scenario that you can adjust depending on what sort of responses you get. Or you can improvise all the way. Whatever you like!⁴

Open ended milongas will make it more difficult but do pose a greater challenge. Will you slowly let it go down (until the last dancing couples leaves the floor) or do you create a climax at a certain time, after which people go home?

Most milongas will take from 3 to 8 hours. Whether a milonga is a short one or a long one does make a difference. A long milonga has a different dynamic than a short one.

An all night milonga does require a long stretch of concentration. To stay alert for 6 to 8 hours in a row is mentally exhausting. Take care in preparing yourself for it (maybe a draft scenario, you can improvise with or to fall back on when it doesn't go the way you want it to go). See to it that you are rested as you start.

The main characteristic of a long milonga is that the audience you start with will not be the same you will end with. Dancers can be divided into three groups:

- The early birds: they arrive early and leave on time (family, job, other activities and obligations, etc.)
- The latecomers: they arrive late and usually stay until the end
- The diehards: they don't want to miss anything, they will be there from the first until the last tango

Somewhere in the middle of a milonga you will notice a 'changing of the guards'. The early birds (are planning to) leave and the latecomers (start to) arrive. This will create some unrest. For a DJ this creates a challenging dilemma. At the same time s/he has to create a musical climax for the early birds and create rest for the newcomers who start to dance.

⁴ To be honest, I don't consider a DJ who just puts on an at home prepared scenario as a real DJ. How can you foresee what a milonga will be like, when you prepare a scenario at home?

A short milonga has a different dynamic. The ‘changing of the guards’ effect will be much less prominent or even absent. Usually you will be able to make one musical arc from begin to end. In longer milongas there will be more musical arcs.

If you use special music to break the habits of dancers, use them in the beginning sparingly or not at all.⁵ Later in the evening, when the dancers have built up confidence and dancing routine, you can play specials more often.

The day of the week a salon is taking place is also important. A salon on weekdays will often end earlier than in a salon in weekends. In weekends you can expect the atmosphere to be more relaxed than on weekdays. This effect will be intensified when the day(s) before were also spent dancing. The El Corte brunch salon is a good example.

2.6 Popularity

It is difficult to estimate in advance how many people will come to a salon. There are a lot of complicating factors:

- What is the weather like?
- How was the advertising?
- Is there another salon (or another competing event) close by?
- What is the reputation of the salon?
- Is the salon well organized?
- Is the dancehall easy to find?
- Is there a good parking facility?

Suppose all traffic lights are green and a lot of people come to dance: for a DJ there are some pitfalls. What are those pitfalls you should pay attention to?

- Don't play too big, energetic music. You are inviting dancers to bump into each other. Too much bumping spoils everybody's fun, for a collision tends to influence far more than just four dancers.

⁵ About breaking the habits: see chapter 4 and ‘DJ Arnoud wil ondeugend zijn’ in La Cadena, September 2004 (nr. 99). For DJ's who read dutch: La Cadena published a series of interviews with (mostly Dutch) DJ's in the period April 2003 till December 2004.

Certainly at the busiest time of a salon you will have to play not too energetic and big music. Stick to rhythmical mainstream music from la epoca de oro.

- If you use specials, use them sparingly. Specials tend to excite dancers and afterwards you will have to cool them down again. To calm a crowd you can play D'Agostino and orquestas tipicas from the thirties. Also milonga camperas and some special pieces of music will do the trick.
- Don't play too much unfamiliar music in the first few hours. Stick to music everybody knows and appreciates. Think about Calo, De Angelis, Troilo, D'Arienzo and Canaro. You will build up a lot of goodwill and that will give you enough opportunity for creating a more exciting atmosphere later on.

2.7 Special activities

Are there any special activities, like a dance performance, a speech, a live orchestra a lottery or something else? There should be a balance between special activities and dancing, for dancing is what most people come for. Too many special activities will ruin a milonga and leave the dancers frustrated.

Some organizers do not realize this. They love to hear their own voice (for too long) as they announce a show pair, etc. If you know this, you can tell them the effects it will have on a milonga.

Here are some points that might be useful:

- Keep the breaks between the sets of an orchestra to a maximum of 15-20 minutes.
- In case of a live orchestra: know their schedule by heart, for dancers will ask for it. If you can get a play list, you can even tell them more. And it will prevent you from playing songs they performed.
- A DJ shouldn't try to compete with the orchestra and/or dancing performers. They are the stars, not you. So don't play music they are performing to or any other similar music.
- Play good danceable music that even might sound a bit boring (compared to the live orchestra).
- Don't attract attention by playing (too much) specials.

2.8 Dancers & visitors

The dancers and other visitors will influence the atmosphere. They can make or break a milonga. Are they in a good mood or energy or are they tired? Do they arrive with expectations or do they have an open mind? Try to 'read' the audience and try to play music they want to hear. Doing so you will sometimes be able to sustain a good energy or change a tired atmosphere.

Visitors are another story. Ask them what they expect. Sometimes you can please them with some specials. Everybody knows Piazzolla's Adios Nonino. You can also resort to playing well know tangos like La Cumparsita or El Choclo.

2.9 Conclusion & some cases

So DJ-ing is a lot more than only playing music. There are much more things you will have to pay attention to than you might have thought. However if you are alert and creative, you will notice things that threaten the success of a milonga. By DJ-ing a lot at different salons, you will build up experience in DJ-ing as well as controlling (if possible) circumstantial conditions. Never hesitate to give the organization feedback in a professional way (that is respectful, constructive and not personal).

To conclude this first chapter I present you some cases I encountered at several milongas in several countries. The main question to you is to find a way to deal with these situations, Remember that there might be more solutions or that a situation I defined as problematic needn't be problematic for you and your milonga. In this manual I won't include the answers, but if you are curious about how I solved this or want to offer some cases you experienced yourself, you can always mail me: a.degraaf@hetnet.nl.

2.9.1 Case 1: Salsa versus tango?

Once I DJ-ed at the Tango Mango in Devon (England) and I played Teofilo Chantre's Roda Vida, which is a very 'salssa-able' piece of music. There happened to be a few good salsa dancers present, who immediately started to dance salsa. Since salsa is a stationary type of dance and

tango is not, this caused a bit of a traffic jam on the dance floor. The festivals' hostess (Ruth) solved it in a brilliant way. How?

2.9.2 Case 2: Chairs, chairs and ... more chairs!

Sometime ago during an all night milonga in Edinburgh (Scotland) there was a 10 minute performance scheduled. The rest of the evening was meant dancing only. The organizers were convinced that during this performance everybody should have a chair to sit on. Before the milonga started they placed chairs and tables for the expected number of visitors. There was still enough space to dance for everybody.

What was the consequence of all those tables and chairs? And, more important, what can a DJ do to minimize this effect?

2.9.3 Case 3: A restless DJ

Once I visited a milonga in Munich (Germany) where a very restless DJ tried to create a completely new atmosphere with every piece of music he played. Can you guess what happened? And why?

2.9.4 Case 4: A milonga with many interruptions

Some organizers feel that an all night milonga should be a lot more than dancing only. So they plan dance performances, live music, a lottery, a speech by the host and some other interruptions. As the DJ you will have to fill the gaps between all the events. What kind of music should you play in a situation like this? Why?

3 Classification of music

3.1 Introduction

There is so much tango music and music to dance tango to, that it is easy to loose yourself in it. So a DJ you will need a system to categorize music.

In El Corte we use the following classification criteria:

- Instrumental & vocal
- Rhythmical & lyrical
- Slow & fast
- Energetic & melancholy
- Regular/simple & irregular/complex
- Old & modern

3.2 Instrumental & vocal

Some tangos are music without singing. Other tangos contain also singing, where music accompanies the singing. Tangos without singing are instrumental, tangos with singing are vocal tangos or tango cantandos.

Some dancers flatly refuse to dance to tango cantandos.⁶ Of course this depends on the way a singer sings.

Singing which is integrated into the music will meet less opposition than too demonstrative singing, which only uses music as a background. Too demonstrative singing can be fun for a special occasion, but it soon might irritate the dancers. Whatever you do as a DJ, it is always wise to alternate (series of) instrumental tangos with (series of) sung tangos.

⁶ The unwillingness to dance to sung tangos dates back to the early years of the history of tango. Julie Taylor writes in her book *Paper tangos* (1998: 9-10) about a “traditional rule, no longer always followed or even known, [that] dictates that Argentines not dance to a tango that is sung. Tangueros believed that while dancing they could not attend properly to the music and lyrics, or hear their own experience and identity revealed in the singer’s and musicians’ rendering of profoundly Argentine emotions.”

3.3 Rhythmical & lyrical⁷

Nearly all music is rhythmical and tango music certainly is no exception to this rule. To paraphrase George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: all musical expressions are rhythmical, but some are more rhythmical than others.⁸

So some music however is clearly more rhythmical than other music or at least the rhythm is more obvious. Rhythmical music is music in which the musicians clearly accentuate the music.

For dancers it is clear when to make the next step. Especially beginning dancers are fond of rhythmical music. D'Arienzo is super rhythmical, just listen to his versions of Eduardo Arolas's Derecho Viejo or Enrique Delfino's Re Fa Si and you know what rhythmical means.⁹

Lyrical music is music with a less clearly accentuated pattern.¹⁰ The musical theme in lyrical music is more relaxed, more freely interpreted. Lyrical music is harder to dance to and poses more challenges to be creative. One of the best examples of lyrical music is Carlos Di Sarli after 1942.¹¹ His version of Verdemar is a good example of lyrical music. The rhythm is hidden behind lyrical music lines and romantic lyrics by Roberto Rufino.

On deciding whether music is rhythmical or lyrical, just ask yourself if the melody or the rhythm is dominant. If the melody is dominant, a song is lyrical.

⁷ When I combined the dichotomies rhythmical – lyrical and energetic - melancholy, you will find that 54% is rhythmical and energetical, 31% is lyrical and melancholy, 11% is lyrical and energetical and 4% is rhythmical and melancholy. Clearly there is a relationship between rhythmical and energetical on one side and lyrical and melancholy on the other side.

⁸ Orwell, G., *Animal farm*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1945.

⁹ Listen to D'Arienzo CD *Tango para el mundo* Volume 2(Reliquias).

¹⁰ Lyrical can also be labeled as melodious or latent rhythmical (as opposed to dominant rhythmical).

¹¹ Carlos di Sarli, *El señor del tango*, changed his musical style in September / October 1942 from rhythmical to lyrical. The reason for this is not known, but it might have to do with Alberto Podesta's joining the Di Sarli orchestra.

3.4 Energetic & melancholy

Energetic music is music with a drive in it, it ‘pushes’ you in a direction. Melancholy music lacks this drive almost completely, so that it ‘pulls’ you in a direction. In the beginning of a salon, at least the first two or three hours, the accent should lie on energetic music. After that melancholy music can be played more often. Too much melancholy music will depress the dancers. In my opinion at least 70 to 80 percent of the music in a milonga should be energetic.

Energetic music is music which gives you ‘dancing energy’, that is something you can find in Osvaldo Pugliese’s oeuvre: La Yumba is raw energy. The king of melancholy is probable Carlos Gardel. Listen to Volver and weep, then you will know what melancholy means.

On deciding whether music is energetic or melancholy, just ask yourself : does it give me energy or does it consume energy?

3.5 Slow & fast

The beats per minute (BPM) or tempo determines whether a piece of music is slow or fast. Pieces of music with less than a certain BPM can be considered slow, etc. Any division of what is fast, medium or slow is arbitrary. You might use the following limits, but it is only a suggestion.

Type/rhythm	Slow	Medium	Fast
Tango	< 60	60 – 70	> 70
Milonga	< 85	85- 110	> 110
Valse	< 70	70 – 80	> 80
Specials	< 60	60 – 70	> 70

A DJ program for computers/laptops usually has a BPM facility. If not or if you use CD’s, then you can use your intuition or use a watch and count.¹²

While DJ-ing always realize that too slow or too fast music eventually will result in an empty floor. Too slow means that dancers can not get

¹² On internet you can find free BPM software.

rid of their energy and become frustrated, too fast means they will use up their energy too soon and are no good for the rest of the salon, which will also leave them frustrated. Most of the music you will play should be a normal, medium rhythm. Occasionally you can play fast or slow songs.

Slow and fast pieces of music can be used to induce another mood. Sometimes you will have to temper the enthusiasm of the dancers, otherwise it will get too hectic on the floor. A tanda of slow music can do the trick. Vice versa is also a possibility. Some times, when it all gets to sleepy, you can spice it up the lot by playing a faster tanda.

Fresedo's music is generally quite slow. His tempo seldom reaches the 60 BPM. If you listen to Vida Mia, you realise this slow music. On the other hand Donato Racciatti's tangos are usually quite up tempo, listen to his version of R.I. Brignolo's Chique.

3.6 Regular/simple & irregular/complex

Regular music is music with a fixed rhythm and a simple theme, which repeats itself. By far the most of tango music you hear in a salon is simple, regular music. Most dancers (but especially beginners) appreciate this simplicity, for most of the dancers don't dance to the music but to the beat. They love it for its predictability.

There are also orchestras, who love to play with the rhythms and use several themes in their music. The result is that their music is irregular and complex, for most dancers it will soon be too complex. Experienced dancers love to play while dancing to this music, but remember that a tanda of 3 complex tangos is already quite tricky. The emphasis in a milonga should be placed on simple, regular music.

The king of rhythm is Juan D'Arienzo. His El Choclo versions (Angel Villoldo) is the most regular music I know. One of the best examples of irregular or complex music is Julio De Caro. Listen to Floras Negras and you will realize how complex and irregular this music is. His music was so complex and irregular that it was and still is considered hardly 'danceable' at all.

3.7 Old & modern

Since the early fifties tango has lost much of its popularity to the emerging rock and roll, rhythm and blues and pop, which heralded the era of the youth culture.

A lot of tango orchestras folded, were lost in anonymity or continued their activities with a more condensed line up. In the fifties tango went underground, only to make a (modest) comeback in the eighties. To draw the line between old and modern tango music is risky, but it is certain that the mid fifties to early sixties meant a distinctive trend break in tango music.

However before and during the fifties and sixties there also were musicians who innovated tango (Gobbi, De Caro & Piazzolla) and in the sixties the retro tango orchestra of Miguel Villasboas produced music, which reminded of the thirties.

3.8 Conclusion, discussion and hints

In this chapter we offered you a system to label your music collection. When you start labelling your music, you will encounter several difficulties:

- some dichotomies are subjective. Whether a song is energetically or melancholy, is a matter of taste.
- some dichotomies are continuous. It is hard to tell where to draw the line between rhythmical and lyrical. There will always be songs which can go either way

Apart from these two problems, what to do with Alfredo de Angelis? His music seems to be neither rhythmical nor lyrical and also neither energetic nor melancholy. This is clearly a problem, but also offers you an opportunity. How about using Alfredo de Angelis's music as a neutral reference point?

Labelling your music is a process that will take a lot of time and energy, but it is worth it, because it makes your DJ-life easier. Apart from this, it also has another advantage: it gives you a tool to deal with complaints. Usually somebody who complains doesn't know what should be different, apart from the fact that it should be different music. By asking questions, like: do you want the music to be more energetic, less complex,

etcetera, you can find out what s/he wants. A complaint is also a chance and opportunity to improve your DJ style.

What does the categorization of tango music mean in reality?

We suggest some guidelines to you, but feel free to digress from them:

- Don't play too much sung tangos in a row, and certainly not more than three tandas. Also within a tanda you can mix instrumentals with sung tangos.
- Start a milonga with playing a lot of rhythmical and energetic music from the well known orchestra from la epoca de oro. Later you can also play some lyrical and melancholy music. But be careful with melancholy music; too much will depress your audience.
- Do not always play music with the same rhythm or energy. Even in a tanda it is no problem to play music with a rising beat/energy.
- Play mostly simple and regular tango and only incidentally a complex tango as a special.
- Most of the music you will play should be traditional/old music: 10% to 15% modern and special music is already quite a lot. Thematic milongas (neo tango, etc.) are a different story.

3.8.1 Orchestral typing

If you attach the labels we discussed to individual songs, the next step might be (but methodological unsound) to try to make a typology of the orchestras.

For this I only use the following categories:

- lyrical – rhythmic (L – R)
- melancholy – energetic (M – E)
- simple – complex (C)

In the matrix below we will (try to) discern whether an orchestra's whole oeuvre (or partial oeuvre) is rhythmical or lyrical, melancholy or energetic and what the complexity of the music is. It goes without saying that this is a rather subjective activity, which you can disagree with.

The values we use are: neutral (0), low (+), medium (++) and high (+++). In doing so every orchestra can be scored in 7 classes: highly rhythmical, medium rhythmical, low rhythmical, neutral, low lyrical, medium lyrical and highly lyrical. For energeticity (energetic versus melan-

choly) the same applies. For complexity there are only three classes: complex (+), neither complex, nor simple (0) and simple (-).

Orchestra	R	E	C
De Angelis, Alfredo	0	0	-
Biagi, Rodolfo	R++	E++	+
Bianco, Eduardo	R+	E+	-
Buzon, Manuel	R+	E++	-
Calo, Miguel	R+	E++	0
Canaro, Francisco	R+	E++	-
Carabelli, Alfredo	R+	E+	0
De Caro, Julio	L+	M+	+
Castillo, Alberto	L+	M+	0
Charlo	L++	M++	0
Color Tango	R++	E+	0
D'Agostino, Angel	R+	E+	-
D'Arienzo, Juan	R+++	E+++	-
Demare, Lucio	R++	E++	0
Di Sarli, Carlos (after 1942)	L++	E++	0
De Dios Filliberto, Juan	L++	M+	0
Donato, Edgardo	R++	E++	-
Esposito, Genaro 'Tano'	R+	E+	0
Federico, Domingo	R++	E++	0
Firpo, Roberto	R++	E++	0

Francini – Pontier	L++	M+	+
Fresedo, Osvaldo	L++	M+	0
Garcia, Jose	R++	E+	0
Gobbi, Alfredo	R+	E+	0
Lamarque, Libertad	L++	M+++	+
Laurenz, Pedro	R++	E++	0
Lomuto, Francisco	R+	E+	0
Maderna, Osmar	L+	E+	+
Maglio, Juan	R+	E+	0
Malerba, Ricardo	R++	E++	0
Mora, Enrique	R++	E++	0
Omar, Nelly	R++	E+	+

Orquesta Tipica Brunswick	R+	E+	0
Orquesta Tipica Victor	R+	E+	0
Piazzolla, Astor (before 1954)	L+	E+	+
Pugliese, Osvaldo	R++	E+++	+
Quinteto Pirincho	R++	E++	0
Racciatti, Donato	R++	E++	0
Rodriguez, Enrique (tradi.)	R++	E+	0
Rodriguez, Enrique (funny)	R++	E++	+
Rotundo, Francisco	R++	E++	0
Sassone, Florindo	R+	M+	0
Sexteto Mayor	R++	E++	0
Simone, Mercedes	L++	M+++	+
Tanturi, Ricardo	L+	E+	0
Troilo, Anibal	R++	E++	0
Villasboas, Miguel	R++	E++	0

If you summarize the scores of the different orchestra you will get the next matrix as an result.

Highly lyrical/ Highly melancholy	Medium lyrical Lamarque, Simone	Low lyrical	Neutral	Low rhythmic	Medium rhythmic	Highly rhythmic
Medium melancholy	Charlo					
Low melancholy	De Dios Filliberto, Francini & Pontier, Fresedo	De Caro, Castillo		Sassone		
Neutral			<i>De Angelis</i>			
Low energetical		Maderna, Tanturi, Piazzolla,		Bianco, Brunswick, Carabelli, D'Agostino, Esposito, Gobbi, Lomuto, Maglio, Brunswick, Victor	Garcia, Omar, Rodriguez	
Medium energetical	Di Sarli (sfter '42)			Buzon, Calo, Canaro	Biagi, Demare, Donato, Federico, Firpo, Laurenz, Malerba, Mora, Pirincho, Racciatti, Rotundo, S. Mayor, Troilo, Villasboas	
Highly energetical					Pugliese	D'Arienzo

Is this system to categorize tango music and tango orchestras the only way to do it? Of course not. Any DJ should feel free to categorize music the way that suits him/herself best. Our minds works in different and mysterious ways and this is especially the case with DJ's.

Other ways to categorize tango music are:

- Danceable versus non danceable (salon fahig or not salon fahig)
- Native, Argentinean versus foreign, non Argentinean
- Extravert and introvert
- Consonant and dissonant music

3.8.2 Introvert & extravert

A few years ago I have started to categorize music and orchestras in 'introvert' and 'extravert'.

Introvert orchestras can be found mostly among the older orchestras (twenties and thirties) with a small line up (usually orquesta tipicas). Their music can be characterised by its intimacy and modesty, which usually has a calming effect on dancers and which invites dancers to dance in small steps (ideal for overcrowded milongas). The most striking characteristic of introvert orchestras is their seemingly 'uneventfulness'.

Introvert orquestas are: Bachicha (Juan Bautista Deambroggio), Eduardo Bianco, Francisco Canaro (early period), Alfredo Carabelli, Angel D'Agostino, Carlos Di Sarli (early period), Edgar Donato, Francisco Lomuto, Juan Maglio, Orquesta Tipica Brunswick, Orquesta Tipica Petrucelli, Orquesta Tipica Victor, Juan Bautista Guido, Roberto Zerrillo, Juan De Dios Filiberto, Anselmo Aieta, Antonio Bonaveno, Enrique Santos Discepolo, Agesilao Ferrazano, Los Provincianos, Francisco Pracanico, Francisco Spaventa, etc.¹³

Extravert orchestras are dominant in their music. Their musical style aims at grandness. It is music which can be described as 'eventful'.

¹³ You can find a lot of introvert orquestas on the CD '20 Orquestas olvidables' (EBCD116): Anselmo Aieta, Manuel Pizarro, Julio Pollero, Orquesta Tipica Cayetano Puglisi, Enrique Di Lorenzo, Juan De Dios Filiberto, etc. Also the DBN/ EMI Relquias release 'Recordando Orquestas' and the Harlequin releases 'Buenos Aires to Berlin' (HQ CD 61) and Buenos Aires to Madrid' (HQ CD 88) contain recordings from introvert orquestas.

These orchestras regularly use (de)crescendo's, whereas introvert orchestras are more 'linear' in their music. The musical line ups of extravert orchestras are greater (the gran orquestas). The extravert orchestra's usually date back to the forties and fifties. The rise of D'Arienzo at the end of the thirties meant a great stimulant for extravert music. The extravert orchestras music has an energizing effect on dancers and invites them to dance in a spacious way.

Examples of extravert orchestras are: Juan D'Arienzo, Alfredo De Angelis, Miguel Calo, Pedro Laurenz, Florindo Sassone, Osvaldo Pugliese, Miguel Villasboas, Anibal Troilo, etc.

When DJ-ing I usually start a milonga with extrovert orchestras from the forties. These orchestras have a lot of drive. Towards the end of a milonga I occasionally play some introvert orchestras. At that time dancers usually have spent a lot of energy and welcome music with a more sedate pace. Introvert orchestras can also function to cool down an overexcited crowd.

3.8.3 Consonant & dissonant music

Music in general and tango specifically can be also be divided into consonant and dissonant music.

Consonant music is, by definition, music that makes concords. A concord is "a chord that is pleasing or satisfactory or pleasing in itself without others to follow". Dissonant is the opposite; that is "not in harmony, harsh toned, incongruous".¹⁴

Examples of consonant music are (in classical music) Mozart, Beethoven and Bach and (in tango) Troilo, Calo, Fresedo and De Angelis. Examples of dissonant music are (in classical music) Stravinsky, Schonberg, Schnittke and Glass and (in tango) Julio De Caro, Piazzolla (seventies) and Pugliese.

Consonant music tends to appeal to the emotional side of the human brain, whereas dissonant music appeals to the rational side of the human brain. It could very well be argued that consonant music has a calming effect on listeners and dancers, where as dissonant music has an 'upsetting' effect.

Of course we realize that

¹⁴ Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1979: 210, 216, 299-230.

- it is hard to define consonant and dissonant music
- consonant and dissonant is a social construct which can be different in different cultural settings and times
- it is hazardous to label an artist (with a complete oeuvre) as consonant or dissonant.

3.9 Where to find music

I am often asked where I find all these tango music and special music. Hardly an chained salon or International Week in El Corte passes without this question. So how can you find good danceable music? Also the question to what are good tango music labels pops up regularly. To the first question there are more than one answer. The second question is a matter of taste.

3.9.1 Knowledge is everything

If I hear something nice I ask the DJ what he is playing. Most DJ's I know are more than willing to share their knowledge. My advice is to make notes. It is just too easy to forget. In time you will build a system of knowledge about tango music, tango styles and tango musicians/orchestras. There are also some very good books on tango. Just to name a few: Birkenstock & Ruegg, Sebastian & Labrana and Ludwig'.¹⁵ Surfing on the internet can also be very helpful. There are a lot of tango sites. My advice is to go to todotango.com. They have a large section of musicians, orchestras, singers and tango poets and a lot more. And if you have enough time, just google freely. Sifting through a large pile of junk, you also will find some gems.

3.9.2 Music shops

Whenever I see a music shop and I do have time, I enter this shop. Some are not interesting at all, others are excellent: Ludwig Beck, Marienplatz, Munich, Germany, Saturn, Cologne, Germany. Before entering it might be wise to make a decision on how much you can afford or wish to spend. Don't forget your credit card!

¹⁵ See chapter 17 for a complete list of suggested reading.

There are also internet stores for which you really do need a credit card:

- iTunes store
- Todotango.com
- Tangostore.com
- Amazon.com

3.9.3 Music lovers

Exchange information and music with other music lovers and DJ's and do so with an open mind. Notice that I am talking about music lovers and not only about tango lovers. In time you will build a network of friends, which will supply you with lots and lots of (information about) music. Ask other music lovers about their network and where they find their music.

3.9.4 Being a DJ helps

This means that you are active in music. Some dancers will ask you about music you don't know. This means you can try to find out. There are even tango dancers who bring CD's to you, which is an initiative that should be encouraged at all times!

Do explain to them that you cannot play it right away and that you first want to listen to it at home. This gives you time to decide on what is good music and what you certainly don't want to play!

3.9.5 Accidental encounters

Sometime you just run into music quite unexpectedly. This can be a commercial on TV, a tune in a movie you are watching, music they are playing in a hotel, sauna, music shop, etc. Anything that makes you think: "Hey, I feel like dancing!" is likely to be suited for dancing.

Sometimes I hear music in TV commercials which is perfectly suited for dancing. I surf to their website and ask who the performers are and if they can send me an mp3-file. Some sites will send you the music and others don't respond at all. You can always try. You have nothing to lose.

3.9.6 DJ Discussion forums

There are some DJ discussion forums on internet. You will find music and info there. I have not much experience with these groups, because I already have (more than) enough input. Discussions on the groups tend to be rather specific, technical and subjects can be trivial. Sometimes it seems that the forum members are more interested in talking about DJ-ing than in the actual DJ-ing itself ☺.

Tango music and special music which is suited for tango can be found at expected places (music shop & internet) and unexpected places. A tango DJ will have to have an extensive tango music library, which is collected over the years. When you start building yours, you soon will find out that some music labels are very good and others are really bad or have a mediocre sound quality. To help you we will list some good labels and some mediocre labels.

3.10 Music labels

Music labels that distribute good tango music are Tango Argentino (DBN), Reliquias (DBN/EMI), From Argentina to the world and RCA Victor 100 anos (BMG). They all distribute very good quality music, music that has been (digitally) improved very well.

Mediocre music labels are El Bandoneon, Harlequin, Las Grandes Orquestas del Tango, En FM tango, Music Hall, Buenos Aires Tango Club and Danza y Movimiento. Sound quality differs from mediocre at best and to downright catastrophic at worst.

4 Structuring a milonga

4.1 Introduction

What a DJ can do is play at random all his/her favourites with the implicit assumption that they are beautiful and very danceable. It might happen that a DJ who works like this will play a lot of completely incompatible music in a row. The result will be that the dance floor is empty and the dancers are sulking at the bar. Or even worse, they might have gone home and decided never to come back. It does not work this way. A DJ will have to bring some sort of a musical structure in a salon. In this chapter we will hand you the tools for structuring a salon: tanda and tandacycle, musical arcs, cortinas and specials.

4.2 Tanda & tandacycle

Tandas are the building blocks of a salon. A tanda is a series of musical pieces that form some sort of a unity. This unity can relate to several aspects:

- Dance form: valeses, milongas, tangos, candombes, specials, etc.
- ‘Colour’ of an orchestra
- A certain musician or singer
- The use of a specific characteristic; for example a characteristic rhythm or instrument

Royce Chan mentions on her website also some other aspects which could / should be observed in the making of a tanda:¹⁶

- Records by the same orchestra
- Recordings from the same period
- Roughly the same speed (beats per minute)
- Roughly the same sound quality and level

A generally used tanda structure is: tango - valse - tango – milonga, which we call a tandacycle. Sometimes a tanda will be replaced by something special. The art of DJ-ing lies in the combination of tandas. Where

¹⁶ R. Chan, The making of a tanda, www.loksze.com (2006).

tandas function as building stones for a salon and a tandacycle as a greater unit of tandas, musical arc's main function is to structure a salon. A musical arc can consist out of one or more tandacycles, which function as a musical unity and present a musical trend in a salon.

4.3 Musical arc

The main task of a DJ is work up to a climax. After the climax you can start all over again. A long salon will contain more than 2 musical arcs, where as a short salon or practice night usually has only 1 or 2 musical arcs.

After reaching a climax you just can't just go on building up pressure. It is an overkill that leads to nothing. It might even be contra productive. After a climax it is wise to pause a little longer before starting a new tanda or musical arc. In this short break the excitement can fade away. For example, I use breaks between songs in a tanda which last about 3 seconds, between tandas 6 seconds and starting a new tandacycle 9 seconds or more.

A DJ always has a choice after a tanda: will I go on building up energy, will I keep the level of energy constant or will I create a dissonant?

In letting a salon slowly fade away till the end, there lies a danger of dancers getting bored. The end of a salon could also be some sort of a climax. Dancers love it to go home with a fine energy or some catchy tune still ringing in their ears. If you hear some people whistling or humming the theme you ended with, this means you did a good job.

And finally, most dancers appreciate it when a DJ announces the end of the salon: 'and now the last five: three tangos from D'Arienzo, La Cumparsita and something special'. The reason for this is that some people make an appointment to dance the last tanda or the last tango.

4.4 Cortina

A cortina (literally a curtain) is a piece of music, which is not meant for dancing. It is used to separate tandas. Its function is for dancers to leave the dance floor so that new combinations can be formed. At least that is the way it is in some milongas in Argentina. The use of cortinas was (re)introduced from Argentina to Europe in mid nineties.

Among dancers and DJ's it is a controversial subject. Either you are in favour or you are against cortinas. We think it is important for a DJ to know why s/he (doesn't) uses cortinas. To do it because they also do it in Argentina is absurd. Cortinas have a function in a salon: to promote the circulation of dancers and people who at the moment are not dancing. It also functions as an opportunity for people to mix. Cortinas also can have a commercial function: it gives waiters time to serve the dancers.

The situation of the dance floor is a crucial factor for (not) using cortinas. If the dance floor is surrounded by tables and chairs, then the dancers can't easily get into contact with others at the opposite site of the dancehall, cortinas do have a function. If the dance floor isn't surrounded by tables and chairs, there is no need for cortinas. So in El Corte we do not use cortinas (although some of our guest DJ's do), but what we do sometimes is a slightly longer period of silence between two tandas. This is what we call a silent cortina, which you can interpret as a compromise between a cortina and a constant flow of music.

Personally, I don't like milonga with cortinas for they tend to create chaos on the dance floor and what is more; they disturb the flow I try to create.

4.5 Specials

Specials are also subject of some controversy, but not as distinct as cortinas. A special is a piece of music to which you can dance tango, valse, etc, has certain elements of surprise (certainly not mainstream music!) and is meant to tempt dancers to break their dancing habits.

Specials usually are pieces of 'world music' (klezmer, salsa, mambo, rumba, etc.), classical music (opera, etc) or popular forms of music (jazz, blues, pop, etc.). Tango music can also function as special music. Think about Astor Piazzolla's tango nuevos or spin offs from well know orchestras like Francisco Canaro's and Enrique Rodriguez's. Specials function as a way of breaking of the habits of dancers, after which you can begin a new musical arc. Sometimes they also function as a sort of cortina while promoting the circulation. Specials can be cortinas you dance to.

Finally a warning to DJ's on the use of specials: don't use a special too often and keep them special. A special tango (also known as an alterna-

tive tango) usually has a limited life cycle, which is logical: since a special has more distinctive characteristics, people do grow fed up with them more easily. Therefore it is wise to use your favourite specials sparingly; that is to keep them special.

4.6 Bridge songs

Certain songs can be used to initiate a new musical direction in a milonga, while at the same time they make an emotionally logic connection between two musical atmospheres. These songs are called bridge songs. For example, if you have been building up energy and momentum for some time, there will be a certain point when you will have to stop doing so. If you don't, it will backfire for sure.

A lot of bridge songs will be specials, but also traditional tangos, waltzes and milongas can function as a bridge. In the following list I will give some examples. This list is not intended to be complete; it is a personal list. Other tango DJ's surely will use other bridge songs!

Song title	Artist	CD title (year)	Bridging ...
Usual happiness	Kroke	10 pieces to save the world (1999)	Energetic-lyrical.
Felicia	Domingo Federico	Saludos (1995)	Tango-milonga.
La yumba	Otros Aires	Dos (2007)	Pugliese-neo.
Milonga sentimental	Otros Aires	Otros Aires (2005)	Milonga-neo.
Etc.	-	-	-

4.7 Conclusion

Regardless of what type of tango DJ you are or aim to be; now it is up to you to build a wonderful salon.¹⁷ You have all the tools. It should be

¹⁷ In general you can distinguish three types of tango DJ's: the **traditional** DJ (only plays tangos from la epoca de oro and before this period), the **eclectic** DJ (plays not only traditional tangos, but also specials/alternative tangos) and the **thematic** DJ (plays for example only neotango and specials/alternative tangos).

easy, but it is not. Sometime it is very hard and frustrating work. Even experienced DJ's will have nights it just doesn't work out. Some times feel catastrophic. Help, the DJ is drowning! What to do in a situation like this?

- Play it safe. Play only traditional rhythmical tangos everybody knows and loves. Have some super tandas in reserve. This gives you time to readjust your strategy.
- Don't experiment with new pieces of music you want to try out. If you don't feel happy as a DJ it is wise to keep a low profile. Don't try to attract attention at all. Some opportunities just are not meant for a DJ to give a personal touch to. So be it, accept it and wait for better times.
- Don't panic. Most dancers will give you more credit than you will expect. They will realize that you are trying to please them and still have to learn the trade. And as long as you are learning, they will keep on giving you credit. It is however another matter if you are obnoxious and don't learn anything. And most important, remember, also experienced DJ's have their off days.
- Get into contact with the dancers and ask if they like it, if they have requests, etc.

5 Do & don't

5.1 Introduction

*“Everybody wants to be a DJ,
Everybody thinks it is oh so easy.”
(Soulwax, Too many DJ's)*

*“Those who can't dance say the music is no good.”
(Jamaican proverb, anonymous)*

We conclude the part on the art of DJ-ing with some guidelines, we learned by experience.

5.2 Don't loose your concentration

Sometimes you will have to work for hours and naturally you will experience lesser periods of DJ-ing. Focus yourself on playing music people want to dance to.

Should a DJ dance while DJ-in? We don't advise it. Dancing while playing music is risky. Dancers might interpret it that you don't take DJ-ing seriously and even find it not very respectful. On practice nights and informal salons it is okay for a DJ to dance, but only as long as the DJ manages to remain in control of the musical flow. On the other side, some dancing to feel the atmosphere, might have a function for a DJ.

Also (if you DJ with a laptop and have access to internet) don't read and answer your mail, don't play games (sound might interfere with the music you play) and don't google, etc. It is not very polite towards the dancers, because they will notice that you are not fully concentrated on DJ-ing.

5.3 Try to 'read' your audience

A good DJ respects his audience. S/he is there to see to it that the dancers have a good time dancing. A DJ who is able to read the signals from his audience and is able to translate them in to the musical scenario, shows his respect to the audience. But how do you read your audience? The following points might help you reading your audience:

- How many people are dancing and how many are not? Dancers have a tendency to spread out proportionally in a space. If proportionally few people are dancing, a DJ should change his strategy.
- Who is leaving the dance floor and who is entering? If beginners leave the floor en masse, you might be playing too complex music. Vice versa if experienced dancers leave the floor, it could be that the music is too simple, maybe even boring. Aim at a compromise.
- What are the expressions of the dancers and the people who watch? Do they look happy, concentrated, confused, etc? Are they enjoying themselves or not? By getting into contact with the dancers in a nonverbal way (a wink, a nod, a smile, etc.) you will often evoke a signal of what they feel. These signals give you a lot of information. I spend more time watching dancers than selecting music to play.
- Is the dancing chaotically or in a disciplined way? Are there (too much) collisions? If so; switch to more simple, rhythmical and certainly not too big music most dancers know by heart. Avoid powerful Pugliese music for some time.
- Is there a lot of talking when a piece of music or a tanda is finished and the other has not begun yet? Maybe you will have to calm your audience a bit or maybe there is not enough energy and excitement.
- Are dancers faithful to their (dance) partners or is there a lot of switching? If so, what do you do with it?
- Are there 'chronic wallflowers', people who don't dance at all? Maybe you can ask them if they have a request or match them to somebody. Their enthusiasm when they get to dance, is very inspiring for a salon.
- What is circulation speed of dancers and loungers? A low circulation speed means that a salon is static. You can try to bring more variation in your music.

When Fatboy Slim was asked what defines a good DJ he said: "For me, it is whether they look up or not while they are playing. A good DJ is always looking at the crowd, seeing what they like, seeing whether it's working, communicating with them, smiling at them. A bad DJ is always

looking down at the decks and just doing whatever they practised in their bedroom, regardless of whether the crowd is enjoying it or not.^{18 19}

Another nice quote on reading your audience comes from blues virtuoso B.B. King, who is always prepared to change his play list during a concert, just to win over the audience: “I am concerned about them. Those are the people that caused me to be on the stage, and they can take you off the stage. It is kind of like in any business. Are you listening to them, pro or con? Each audience is kind of like, excuse the word, a lady. They have a right to change their mind, and they do. You have to be alert enough to tell that if you are not going very well in this direction, change it, abruptly.”²⁰

5.4 Know your music

“Boy, you have to honour the music more than your mother.”
(Omar Vega’s old teacher)

A good DJ knows his music and is obsessive about his music collection. Knowing your music will consume a lot of time, if not a lifetime.

If you don’t know the music your are playing, how can you estimate what effects it will have on the audience? And a good DJ should always be hungry for new music.

To illustrate this, I quote Brewster and Broughton (again):

“The DJ knows music better than you, better than your friends, better than everyone else on the dance floor or in the record shop. (...) A great DJ will hit a room with musical moments so new and so fresh that it is irrelevant that the music is recorded, and so powerful that they easily surpass your all time favourites. (...) The real work of a DJ isn’t standing

¹⁸ Brewster & Broughton, *Last night a DJ saved my life*, 2006: 20. For DJ’s who read Dutch, Arne van Terpenhoven & Toon Beemsterboer, *Door! Dance in Nederland* might also be interesting. Especially the chapters on Michel de Hey and Ferry Corsten are revealing, even for a tango DJ.

¹⁹ Fatboy Slim (born Quentin Leo Cook) is an English musician (drums), producer and DJ in the modern dance music genre. His music style is known as big beat, which is a combination of hip hop, break beat, rock, trance, house and rhythm and blues. Before pursuing a solo career, he was a member of The Housemartins and Freakpower. For more info, see Wikipedia UK.

²⁰ Kostelanetz, R., B.B. King, *The B.B. King Companion. Five decades of commentary*, 1997: xv.

behind some record decks for a couple of hours, looking shifty and waiting for some drink tickets; the time and effort comes in a life spent sifting through music and deciding if it is good, bad or *'Oh-my-God-listen-to-this!* 'A DJ's job is to channel the vast oceans of recorded sound into a single unforgettable evening. (...) To become a good DJ you have to develop the *bunger*. You have to search for new records with the same zeal of a gold rush prospector digging in a blizzard. You have to develop an excitement for vinyl that verges on a fetish. You should not be able to walk past a charity shop without worrying what classic rarity you might have missed nestling among those Osmond LP's."²¹

5.5 Know your audience

If you know what the audience likes and what they don't like you can avoid a lot of trouble. Don't hesitate to ask the dancers. Also the organization can usually provide good info. For example if they recently provided a milonga workshop, you can play some more milonga tandas.

5.6 Know yourself

Knowing yourself, your weak points and your strong points is important. Be critical to yourself but not too critical, or otherwise it will spoil your fun in DJ-ing. Being aware of mistakes you made, will teach you important lessons. It is not a problem to make a mistake, but it is irritating for your audience if you do not learn from it. You might want to keep a DJ-diary in which you write down the things you learned. Also helpful will be evaluating your own play list a few days later.

5.7 Perform in a dynamic way

Always try to aim at a dynamic performance. A DJ who plays the same type music all night long doesn't do the dancers any good. Even if the music is brilliant and very good to dance to, it will become irritating after some time. Variety is the spice of life.

²¹ Brwester & Broughton, *Last night a DJ saved my life*, 2006: 16-17.

5.8 Look for the ‘common denominator’

Most DJ’s I know, happen to be experienced dancers and have also an extensive musical knowledge and experience in tango music and other types of music. This implies a risk in DJ-ing. A DJ might have an unconscious tendency to play difficult and musically interesting or special music. For beginners this is usually too difficult to dance to and they drop out. Believe me, you don't want that to happen, because without beginners a tango community has no future at all. Play simple music, music used in teaching tango, etc. and only incidentally something more complicated.

5.9 Do not play too loud

As I mentioned before: if you have to shout, the music is too loud. However when you have been DJ-ing for some hours, you might get used to a certain sound volume and wonder it is still loud enough. An occasional walk through the dance hall will help you place it into the right perspective. Also leaving the dance hall for a few minutes (smoking, toilet, some fresh air) will do the trick.

During a milonga you will have to adjust the sound volume constantly. In the beginning of a milonga (when there are not many visitors yet) the sound volume needed is less than what the milonga needs when it is fully crowded. Towards the end, when people start to leave, you should not forget to turn the sound volume lower otherwise it will become too loud.

So you will be constantly adjusting the volume, also because there are serious differences in sound levels between different recordings.

Not only the sound volume is an important factor, but also too much bass and treble can irritate the dancers. It is unpleasant for your ears. Note that in neo tango music there usually is a lot of bass. So it might be wise to adjust the sound and/or bass, or neighbours will start complaining! Use your equalizer!²²

²² Michiel Lombaers discusses in great length what you can do with a mixing console; see chapter 12.

5.10 Don't try to attract (too much) attention

A DJ is there at the service of the dancers and not for some ego boosting. Of course you will show your character in playing music, but be critical to yourself.

This is not an easy thing for beginning DJ's. Sometimes you find fascinating music you fall in love with. Such a blind spot can give you a bum steer. What you think is fascinating music, is a very personal thing. It is absolutely no guarantee that others will share your enthusiasm. What to do with this special piece of music that is 'haunting' you? Don't play it for some weeks and check if it still is a darling to you. Try to dance to it and register how it feels. Try it out in an informal setting (after a class perhaps) and ask what people think of it. And (sigh) sometimes you will have to kill your 'darling', but you can always listen to it at home. Or you can very carefully try to plug it by playing it over and over again and making it a hit. This is risky.

5.11 Requests

From time to time somebody will request a song. It is up to you if you will humour such a request or requests in general. If you do, you don't have to respond to it immediately. It might very well take about half an hour or more to fit the request into your scheme. A request that doesn't fit into the atmosphere at all can be ignored. Always do explain why you can't honour a request and if you can honour it, about what time they can expect their request.

*“And I get tired of dj's
Why is it always what he plays
I'm gonna push right through
I'm gonna tell him to
Tell him to play us
Play us a slow song”
(Joe Jackson A slow song)*

5.12 Exchange experiences with other DJ's

Apart from exchanging musical experiences with other DJ's it can be helpful to talk shop with other DJ's about DJ-ing. Giving and receiving feedback in a respectful way has never harmed anybody yet. And two do know more than one. The advantage of asking another DJ to give feedback is that s/he speaks the lingo.

5.13 Be your self

"I am a DJ, I am what I play"
(David Bowie, D.J.)

You are unique in your taste and the way you build up a milonga. Be true to yourself. If an organiser asks you to DJ in a style you can't tolerate: say no to the offer.

And if, after a few good gigs in a row, you grow too big for your breeches (that is get conceited), remember John Peels' words: "It is obvious that disc-jockeys, as a class, are essentially parasitic. We are, with lamentably few exceptions, neither creative nor productive. We have, however, manipulated the creations of others (records) to provide ourselves with reputations as arbiters of public taste."^{23 24}

5.14 DJ's life cycle

In a DJ's life cycle you can roughly distinguish three phases:

- learning the trade
- DJ-ing as a 'career'

²³ Peel, John, Margrave of the marshes. His autobiography, London: Corgi Books, 2005:22.

²⁴ John Peel (born John Robert Parker Ravenscroft) was a legendary English DJ, radio presentator and journalist, who was known for his eclectic taste. Peel promoted many new artists and bands of various music styles. Among the bands which credit Peel as a major boost to their careers are: T-Rex, David Bowie, The Sex Pistols, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Fairport Convention, Pink Floyd, The Clash, The Undertones, Buzzcocks, The Cure, Joy Division and PJ Harvey. For more info on John Peel: see previous note and Wikipedia UK.

- resigning as a DJ

The first two phases have been discussed in detail. In this paragraph we focus on the end of a DJ's career, for one thing is sure: you won't go on DJ-ing forever.

There are several reasons for resigning as a DJ:

- DJ-ing becomes a routine. You have been there and done it just too many times. The inspiration is gone. When you start feeling that you have to DJ again in that awful place, with always the same people, the same jokes, our advice is to quit DJ-ing there and maybe quit DJ-ing at all. Or take a sabbatical year and then decide if you want to pursue your career as a DJ. Because if the inspiration is gone and you sit there DJ-ing with all that bad energy around you, the dancers will notice it. Do a service to the dancers and to yourself and quit DJ-ing. By doing that you will change a lose – lose situation into a win – win situation. People will respect you for doing so!
- Other things in life become more important: a career, a family, etc. DJ-ing is fun but it is certainly not the most important thing in life. It was fun while it lasted, but there comes a time to make another step in life.
- DJ-ing is hard work, both physically and mentally. DJ-ing all night costs you a lot of energy. You have to stay concentrated and alert for hours. Think about reading the audience, dealing with requests, talking with guests and organizers, handling the sound system and deciding what to play next. If the task of DJ-ing becomes too strenuous, you can decide to DJ less hours or on less occasions or to quit DJ-ing at all.

So be realistic about it. When your time has come, quit DJ-ing. Don't continue DJ-ing because you have done it for many years, for the money, the prestige or because you feel an obligation to the dancers or the people who hire you. It is just not worth it. After your DJ career is over, you can still be involved in tango DJ-ing by giving constructive feedback to beginning tango DJ's or make up for all those hours of dancing you missed.

Part 2

About tango

6 Candombe, the black roots of tango

6.1 Introduction

Every once in a while at a milonga you hear some wild rhythmical drumming which might make you think you are in Africa. This drumming gives a happy carnival like energy to the dancers. Ten to one that the DJ did put on a series of candombes. Quite often you will hear *Carnavalito* (performed by Lucio Demare), *Azabache* (Miguel Calo or Francisco Lomuto) *El Tucu Tun* (Enrique Rodriguez) or *Taquito Militar* (Quinteto Pirincho), just to name a few well known and often played candombes.

To most tangueros candombe is nothing more than a milonga, only different, an exotic intermezzo in a milonga. There is however a world of meanings behind candombe, a history which dates back the Spanish colonization of Latin America and slave trade. And please do realize, candombe is an entirely different phenomenon than milonga; dancing a candombe is different from dancing milonga.

6.2 What is candombe?

Just like word tango the word candombe (pronunciation: can-dom-bay) has multiple, but interrelated meanings. Apart from a form of dance and music, candombe also means a society of slaves from a distinct African region (tribe) and also a place where they could meet each other and maintain their own culture. Furthermore candombe means a group of African people living in Latin America as slaves, who have a language, culture and history in common.

As matter of fact, you can view the candombe (which is also called a *nacione*) as a state within a state, although the power of a *nacione* is marginal compared to the state they existed in. The birth of the candombes dates back to the beginning of the colonization of Latin America in the sixteenth century.²⁵

²⁵ The first negro states (*naciones*) in Latin America's colonial history date back to the seventeenth century (Mexico and Brazil). In Buenos Aires the first *naciones* date from the eighteenth century and they disappeared at the end of the nineteenth century. Their disappearance was caused by the enormous wave of immigrants that came to Argentina, the yellow fever epidemic of 1871, the wars between unitarians

6.3 The colonial era

When Columbus discovered Latin America, it was a relatively sparsely populated continent with a lot of great economical possibilities. The soil was fertile and therefore suited for farming and cattle breeding. It was also rumoured that the soil contained great quantities of minerals which could be exploited by mining them.²⁶

To exploit the riches of this newly discovered continent, a lot of work needed to be done. The indigenous inhabitants of Latin America (by mistake Columbus called them Indians), were not suited for this purpose. Either they weren't suited physically to do so or they wanted to stay independent.²⁷

So labour had to be imported. In the beginning this meant slave trade. Millions of slaves were kidnapped from Africa and transported to Latin America to work there. When the slave trade was abolished in the middle of the nineteenth century, immigrants from all over Europe were called upon to fulfil this need.

Argentina at the time of the birth of tango existed out of four groups: the indigenous people (Indians), the Spanish colonist's offspring, the black slaves and their offspring from Africa and the immigrants from all over Europe.

and federales and interracial marriages. The number of blacks in Buenos Aires dropped to a few percents at the beginning of the twentieth century. Juan Carlos Caceres states in the liner notes of his CD *Murga Argentina* (Buena Manana, 2005) that around 1850 approximately one in every three inhabitants of Buenos Aires was black.

²⁶ This rumor was presumably fabricated by Columbus himself. Carlos Fuentes (1992) states that when Columbus discovered that there wasn't the prosperity he had hoped for, he created the myth of a new continent with gold and silver, in the hope that this would justify his expedition in the eyes of his lady protector, Queen Isabella.

²⁷ Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century there have been skirmishes between the indigenous inhabitants of Argentina and the governmental power in Buenos Aires.

6.4 Slaves, free blacks and their dance

The slaves, which originated from different regions from Africa, succeeded to cling to their own tribal culture and adapt it to the predominantly catholic culture they had landed in. They were allowed to celebrate catholic holidays and they used these holidays to celebrate their own religion under the disguise of Catholicism.

Epiphany (January 6) was their favourite holiday as it involved the coronation of a black king. The slave societies (*naciones*) took advantage of the situation to crown and honour their own black kings.

When slaves arrived in Latin America they had established (with their masters' permission) a sort of tribal societies, which rested on the principle of solidarity.²⁸ Their main objective was to free slaves by buying them from their masters and also the celebration of their own culture and religion.

An important function for the maintenance of their own culture, was fulfilled by the dance festivals they organized. Especially the carnival with its *murgas* and *comparsas* was one of the most attention attracting activities in this phenomenon.²⁹

Just after the Revolution of 1810 Argentina abolished slavery. Juan Manuel de Rosas freed the slaves and took part in the carnival himself. He sat beside the throne of the black king of the carnival. After the Confederates lost their power in 1852, the negro carnival also lost its protector De Rosas.

The negroes withdrew to their own neighbourhoods and danced in their own clubs. Sebastian and Labrana conclude that "the carnival parades lost their *couleur locale* and would never regain the atmosphere from the rhythmical, colourful days from before the Confederacy. The upper class of Buenos Aires, liberal and Unitarian, didn't accept this lacuna and

²⁸ The *naciones* were tolerated by the authorities, but just barely tolerated. For most activities they had to ask for a written permission, which could be revoked at any time, for no reason at all. At the end of the nineteenth century the *naciones* disappeared from the Argentinean society.

²⁹ *Murgas* and *comparsas* are a sort of informal *orquestas*, who were dressed in patriotic costume made music and danced for the public which were viewing the carnival parades. From Canaro it is known that he took part in these little *orquestas*. The difference between a *murga* and a *comparsa* lies in the race of the musicians and dancers, who accompanied the carnival parades. A *murga* is predominantly white while a *comparsa* is a black affair (Plisson, 2002).

urged their young members to go into the streets and replace the black joy. [...] This is how the comparsa (a masked group) of the society of Los Negros came into being, who made a great impression at the carnival of 1866. [...] A year later, only a few days after carnival, the negroes left their Barrio de Tambor and paraded through town while beating their drums.”³⁰

6.5 Candombe and tango

Candombe did bear little resemblance to the rural Argentinean dances and the dances imported from Europe. Candombe can be seen as a fusion between the various African dances and musical traditions. It is characterized by its wild rhythms, the improvised steps, the hunched shoulders and the energetic athletic movements. Also the cortes and quebradas play an important role in candombe dancing. Before tango was called tango, it was known as ‘el baile con cortes y quebradas’.

Candombe played a major role in the formation of tango. Latin American music in general and tango especially is the result of a gradual fusion of the music of the indigenous people, the European conquerors and the African slaves. While European song forms and instrumentation played a distinct role and indigenous rhythms and instruments fulfilled a more marginal role, the African factor might be the most dominant factor in the evolution of Latin American music.

The candombe was born between 1750 and 1850. Tango came into being in the last half of the nineteenth century. The three main musical genres which created tango are candombe, habanera and rural milonga.

It is likely that candombe had an energizing effect on the rural milonga and in doing so created the urban milonga (the one we dance to during our milongas today).^{31 32} After 1850 the blacks started to be more interested in white dances and vice versa the same thing happened, although not always in a positive way. For example, the white compadritos (tough guys) mocked the candombe during carnival parades.

³⁰ Source: Sebastian & Labrana, 1988. Translation by author.

³¹ Nowadays most people associate candombe mostly with Uruguay and not the role it played in tango’s origin.

³² Piazzolla often uses the rural milonga (milonga campera) rhythms. Listen for example to the bass lines of Milonga for three and Milonga del Angel.

Both candombe, milonga and tango can be seen as transgressive dances; which means dances which transcend social barriers.³³ In the phenomenon tango both black and white elements fused. In a later stadium tango was stripped of the black elements, as was to be expected of a country which strove to be the most European country of Latin America.

When listening to tango on a average milonga, you will hardly notice the black roots of tango. The African influence shown mostly, is in the few candombes which did survive and the urban milongas.³⁴ I suspect that these candombes are watered down versions of the originals from the nineteenth century.

The African influence in Latin American music and especially tango do show in the polyphonic character of the music. There are always several musical lines in tango, which are exchangingly dominant and supportively underlying. Without its African roots, tango would have been a monophonic phenomenon.

Fuentes (1992) concludes that “from the beginning black music facilitated the listener or dancer with an autonomous, personal, free and even rebellious rhythm, instead of attempting to force a dominant, predictable or prescribed pattern, which is customary in European music.”³⁵

Listening to candombe, you will find that it is precisely this ‘musical anarchy’, which makes candombe a dance which (almost) provokes you in improvising steps. And that is when the fun only starts.

³³ Chasteen (2004) sates that candombe, milonga (Argentina), maxixie, samba (Brazil) and danzon, son (Cuba) are transgressive dances. The social barriers which are transcended in these dances are: race, gender, social-economical status and religion.

³⁴ In my music collection I have only approximately fifty candombes, which is marginal compared to the hundreds of (tango)milongas and valeses and thousands of tangos.

³⁵ Fuentes (1992:192). Translated by author.

7 History of tango

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter we describe a short history of tango as a social phenomenon.

7.2 The prehistory: 1850 – 1880

In the nineteenth century, Argentina was a vast country, rich in raw materials, but scarcely populated. The ruling class wanted to reform Argentina into a modern nation by European standards, which meant Paris, at that time being the cultural centre of the world.

To develop this enormous potential meant a lot of labour and labourers were needed. The Argentine government solved this problem by developing an immigration policy. Their motto was to govern is to populate. Starting around 1860 this resulted that in over the following 80 years approximately 4 to 6 million immigrants entered Argentina. The majority of the immigrants came from the poorer southern regions in Europe (Italy, Spain, etc.), as well as the rest of Europe (Germany, Poland, England, Russia, etc.) and a considerable minority from Middle East.

In their attempt to convince Europeans to immigrate to Argentina, the recruiters sketched an image, which was too positive. Argentina wasn't the land of milk and honey, but a country that couldn't fulfil the high-strung expectations. The prospects of the immigrants were far from promising. This was caused by poverty, bad housing conditions, little chance of moving upward on a socio-economical scale and the melting pot of many different nationalities and cultures, which caused considerable social unrest. Most of the immigrants wound up in the capital of Argentina, Buenos Aires. From 1869 to 1914, Buenos Aires grew from a relatively small Latin American capital (ca 180 000 inhabitants) to a metropolis (ca 1 500 000 inhabitants). The immigrants mostly lived in large overcrowded conventillos where a family all too often had only one room to live in.³⁶ The conventillos were situated in the suburbios, an

³⁶ The term conventillo refers to boarding houses in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century a vast number of the immigrants were housed in conventillos. A conventillo consisted of many rooms around a central courtyard with a common cooking area. After the wars between Confederates

area where rural and urban values but also different cultures and nationalities clashed. The suburbios were generally viewed as the source of evil: crime, immorality, epidemics and ... tango!

7.3 The birth of tango: 1880-1890

Tango probably materialized around 1880-1890. There is very little known about this period. What is known, however, is the atmosphere tango was born in. Tango was born in a society that was experiencing rapid socio-economical changes, which caused a lot of social stress. In a society that was characterized by a great cultural diversity (many nationalities from immigrants) with little perspective for a better future, immigrants looked for solace by making music and dancing to vent their feelings of nostalgia and frustration.

7.4 Intermezzo

The original tango, both dance and music, may have evolved somewhere on a patio of a conventillo. Immigrants met there at night to talk and drank a glass, while reminiscing of their fatherland, where maybe it wasn't so bad after all. An Italian from Naples sang a song of his hometown. A Greek came out of his room and accompanied the song by guitar. A Rumanian neighbour remembered that his violin had survived the harsh journey to Argentina.

Together they made music, and most of all they improvised. A musical mishmash was the result. After some time, a few Italian mothers danced a few steps of a folk dance, which they remembered from their childhood. Later that night, other immigrants played their music in a constantly changing musical set up, while others danced. At the end of the evening everybody danced with everybody. This might have been the way tango started.

The many musical variants, from a variety of cultures the immigrants came from, may have met and interacted in the conventillos and later on

and Unitarians were over, the barracks for soldiers were converted in to houses for immigrants. Also the yellow fever epidemic of 1871 caused many wealthy inhabitants to flee the area and resettle themselves elsewhere. Their mansions were also converted to conventillos.

the festivities in the barrios. Tango was thus formed by a great diversity of musical influences. Dominant influences in forming the tango were the habanera (Cuba), milonga (Argentina) and the candombe (Africa). Other minor musical influences were tango andaluz, klezmer, polka, waltz and fandango.

7.5 La guardia vieja: 1890-1917

Around the turn of century, tango was a controversial phenomenon in Argentina. Tango was born in the lower class. Opponents came mostly from the upper class, a minority with a lot of influence. They saw tango as something to be ashamed of, a dance of thieves and whores. From 1910 onwards a middle class emerged. The rigid two-class division had disappeared as a consequence of social unrest. Education became available to more people than only the happy few. The middle classes also started to organize themselves politically. Backed up by an improving economical situation, they became a factor to be reckoned with. This development contributed to the growing popularity of tango.

As a dance, tango changed in this period from a sinful dance in the brothels to a more respectable dance in the cafetins. In this process the dance was also simplified. Tango became more and more accepted, although it took many more years before it was generally accepted. Lyrics, if used at all, were short and spicy, often in lunfardo. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the roughness of the lyrics was somewhat softened. Tango lyrics were in this time of minor importance. It was mostly about music. Only after Gardel sang *Mi Noche Triste* in 1917, tango cantando became popular. Well-known exponents of this era were the composers Villoldo and Mendizábal and the musicians Maglio, Greco & his Orquesta Típica Criollo, Arolas, Canaro and Firpo.

In this time musician were mostly amateurs without much musical education. Most of them couldn't even read music and played by ear. Improvisation and paying attention to what the public and dancers really wanted, was essential. Tango music formed the dance and the dance formed the music. Musicians moved from party to party and from barrio to barrio in regularly changing musical formations. This had as a consequence that most of the music from this early period was relatively sim-

ple and the styles of the orchestra's were quite similar. Canaro and Firpo, however, already clearly stood out with their own sound.³⁷

7.6 Tango mania: 1912 – 1917

Rich Argentines were used to spend their holidays in Paris. For their sons it was not unusual to make the grand tour through Europe as a rite de passage. Already in 1903, Argentine tango musicians came to Europe in the slipstream of the rich. Among them were Villodo, Saborido and the married couple Gobbi-Rodriguez. Paris was famous for its recording techniques. Starting around 1905 the first tango records were produced. The market for records was good, because most of the dancehalls were not rich enough to afford a live tango orchestra.

In 1912, tango became quite suddenly very popular. It became the topic of conversation. There were tango dinners, tea dances where you could dance and also learn tango. Furthermore there were tango exhibitions and even a colour tango, which ranged between an orange like brown and yellow ochre.³⁸

The sudden outburst of tango in Paris is hard to explain. Most likely it can be traced back to the longing for the exotic and aesthetic, which was characteristic for *la belle époque*. The Argentine elite, however, was shocked to see that tango, which they saw as disgusting and immoral, to be so favourably received in Europe. Tango's victory didn't come without counter forces. When tango started to become fashionable in Europe (first of all in Paris), the Argentine elite saw this as a deplorable thing: "Tango is in Buenos Aires a dance which is only danced in houses of ill repute and bars of the worst kind. Decent people never dance tango in decent salons. For Argentineans tango music evokes very unpleasant feelings". Thus spoke the Argentine ambassador in Paris.³⁹

Conservative forces in Europe were unanimous in their verdict: tango was evil because "of its sinful and voluptuous character which conflicted with morality".

Religious force both in Europe and the United States condemned tango. In Germany Kaiser Wilhelm II forbade his officers to dance tango in

³⁷ Birkenstock (1999:97).

³⁸ The original method of manufacture of the colour tango was lost. Since then many claimed that their colour was the original one.

³⁹ Birkenstock (1999:102).

uniform. The attempts to ban tango were futile of course and may even have contributed to the popularity of tango. Tango became an overnight sensation and spread quickly all around the world: North America and Canada, Europe and even Japan, where baron Megata popularized tango on his return from Paris.

7.7 La guardia nueva: 1917 - 1935

When the economic situation in Argentina deteriorated, tango also experienced its negative effects. In the twenties, tango lost much of its attraction. Many orchestras fell apart because its members made a career switch or emigrated. For this waning popularity several other causes can be mentioned: competition from American swing music and jazz, the talking pictures etc.

The character of tango music also changed in this period. It evolved from simple folksy dance music to more complicated listening music. In the early twenties, a division had arisen in tango between traditional tango and evolutionary tango. Canaro, Lomuto, De Dios Filliberto and De Angelis can be labelled as traditionalists. Examples of innovating evolutionary tango music are De Caro, Di Sarli, Troilo and Pugliese. Evolutionary tango became the more dominant form during the twenties and early thirties. The period of la guardia nueva ended in 1935, when Gardel died in a tragic plane crash and D'Arienzo formed his famous orchestra.

7.8 La epoca de oro: 1935 –1954

With his rise to fame, D'Arienzo started the golden age of tango, which was to last to 1952 -1954. By playing old guardia vieja tunes in a modern rhythmical version D'Arienzo caused a sensation and lured the dancers back to the milongas. When in 1939 the Second World War started, the economy of Argentina got an extra stimulus, because Argentina exported food to America and Europe. People earned enough money and partied a lot. These are the years that the grand orchestra performed in open-air concertos for thousands of dancing people.

After Juan Peron came to power in 1946, it even went better with tango. Peron broke with the liberal tradition of the thirties, when a lot of nationalistic values had been cast aside. The nationalistic Peron govern-

ment orientated itself to conservative and religious values. For tango this was, curiously, a stimulus. The government decreed that radio should pay significant attention to Argentinean culture (music). This law had a downside, for radio was also to censor music they broadcasted. The aim was of course to protect morality. Lunfardo was to be avoided and lyrics were reshaped, so that it became decent. As a consequence some songs became hardly recognizable.

In a relatively short period, there was enormous amount of talent gathered together in Buenos Aires. The orchestras were full of talented musicians, which at their time started their equally successful orchestras. For example, Piazzolla played for some years with the Troilo orchestra before forming his own orchestra and Biagi played with the D'Arienzo set-up before going solo. The best example of an orchestra literally bursting with talent is Miguel Calo's Orquesta De Los Estrellas, which hosted at one time or another Salgan, Francini, Pontier, Federico and Maderna.

La epoca de oro ended in the period 1952 –54. In 1952 Evita Peron died, which had as a consequence that the political stability deteriorated. In order to restore order, a curfew was issued. For tango this was a serious handicap. In 1954 Piazzolla left for Paris, which may be considered the final accord of this period.

7.9 Tango nuevo: 1954 –1976

In the fifties, a worldwide youth culture emerged, with pop music as an important exponent. Tango was viewed by the youths as nostalgic and nostalgia was clearly out of fashion. In Argentina a new generation grew up, who saw tango as a boring activity, something their old fashioned and square parents engaged in. Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley and later on the Beatles and the Stones pushed tango to a marginal position.

Within tango there was also a great musical innovation going on. Piazzolla changed the concept of tango music definitively by developing tango nuevo arrangements. In the sixties and seventies, Piazzolla drifted away from mainstream tango, while experimenting and innovating with jazz and electronics. In the eighties, Piazzolla managed to find a balance between innovation and tango. Other exponents from tango nuevo are Salgan and Stampone.

7.10 **La joven gaurdia: 1976 – 2000**

In the seventies pair dancing revived after two decades of “free dancing”. This was caused by the disco successes Saturday Night Fever and Grease. The many tango celebrities that toured Europe, North America and Asia in the early eighties caused a new interest in tango: Pugliese, Piazzolla, Sexteto Mayor and Color Tango. The dance show Tango Argentino also contributed a lot to the new fascination with tango. At the end of the eighties there was a renewed musical fascination for music from the Rio de la Plata region.

Another cause was, that under the junta that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983, thousands of political opponents disappeared, were tortured and murdered. Many Argentines fled to Paris. Among them were the musicians Cedron, Mosalini and Beytelmann. The second tango wave also started in Paris, noting that it was much less forceful than the tango mania of the beginning of the twentieth century. This newborn popularity of tango in Europe and the USA also had a positive effect on the Argentinean tango scene. The new generation of tango musicians put a new zeal into it. Among them are Mederos and Warschausky (El Arranque).

In the nineties, outside Argentina musicians from other cultures and other musical disciplines also ventured into tango music: Carel Kraayenhof & Sexteto Canyengue, Tango for Three, Tango Real and van Esboeck & Masondo and Tango al Sur. Also classical musicians had a go at tango, mainly Piazzolla’s tango nuevo. The well known classical musicians Yo Yo Ma and Gidon Kremer covered Piazzolla’s music.

7.11 **Neo tango: 2000 - ?**

In the last few years the international tango scene has been flooded by new sounds and those sounds are something completely different from what we were used to listen and dance to.. In the beginning of the third millennium Gotan appeared out of nowhere with their CD La revancha del tango, like lightning on a cloudless summer day. In the years that followed a lot of bands followed their example. Some were downright copy

cat bands, but others did contribute something new and innovative to the new sound, which soon came to be known as neo tango.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The concept neotango was coined in 2003 by Sharna Fabiano (see: Sharna Fabiano, *The rise of neo tango music*, 2003, www.sharnafabiano.com).

8 Evolution of tango music

8.1 Introduction

Looking back at the history of tango, one cannot help being surprised at the enormous changes it has undergone time and time again. Tango went from conventillo, barrio to brothels and via the cafetins to the big dancehalls of the forties and fifties. Tango as a dance evolved from milonga via tango milonga/canyengue to tango. The musical line-ups changed from trio's and quartetos, via orquesta típicas to gran orquestas. And there is more that changed dramatically over the years, such as lyrics and the tempo music was played in. So let's focus on the musical evolution of tango.

8.2 In the beginning

The origins of tango are shrouded in mystery. Not much of it is known, because apart from some incidental records, the class where tango originated (mostly poor immigrants and gaucho's who came to Buenos Aires) didn't write much about their lives.

I do not know of any sound recordings from the prehistory of tango, although Edison already invented his phonograph around 1889.⁴¹ The music label Victor started to make tango recordings in 1904. At first this happened abroad (England, France and the United States). The first recordings from Alfredo Gobbi senior do date from this period. In December 1907 Victor sent a "travelling machine" to Argentina.⁴² In 1910, 1912 and 1917 Victor's travelling machine revisited Buenos Aires and the Plata region. Several recordings were made of Angel Villoldo, Jose Razzano, Linda Thelma, Ignacio Corsini, Alonso & Minotti, Eduardo Arolas and Juan "Pacho" Maglio.⁴³ The last one can be considered as the

⁴¹ Laird, Sound beginnings. The early record industry in Australia. Sydney: Currency Press, 1999. In the first few decades after Edison's invention, the talking machine was hardly used for recording music.

⁴² Victor's traveling machine can be seen as mobile phonograph that traveled through the Americas, a very early predecessor of the mobile recording studio we know today.

⁴³ Benedetti, H.A., Victor victoria (internet: [AMIA-L] Victor recording series for Argentina, 1904-1933).

first superstar in tango. His popularity was immense and for some time gramophone records were called pachos. In 1922 Victor founded its first permanent recording studio in Buenos Aires, where in 1926 the first electrical recording was made: *La musa msitonga*, which was composed by Flores and Polito and sang by Rosita Quiroga.⁴⁴

The first tango recordings that I do know of dates back to the end of the first decade: *La bicicletta* (1909) and *El Negro Alegre* (approximately the same period) from Angel Villoldo.⁴⁵ What is striking in this versions is the European sound, especially castanets and an Italian opera voice. Soon after this the distinguished European influencers did fade away. For example, Francisco Canaro recorded in 1916 his first version of “*Vibraciones del alma*”, which sounded as a tango we know and recognize as tango today.⁴⁶ The transition from an outlandish Afro-European influenced sound to tango argentino took place in the period 1880/90 - 1910.

The first tangos we know are simpler in structure than later ones. Tango music has its origins from several musical sources. It is generally agreed upon that these sources are Cuban habanera (which functioned as a catalyzing force), Argentinean milonga and African candombe. There are, however, also several European influences on tango, such as polka, mazurka, flamenco, fandango and many more. It is evident that a music form in its embryonic phase still is filled with the elements of the musical sources it originated from. Therefore it only could be simply structured music. It took many years for those elements to mix in a melting pot to a phenomenon we now know and recognize as tango.

Furthermore, the first generation of tango musicians existed mostly out of amateurs. They were immigrants with little, if any at all, musical education. The children of the immigrants, the second generation, often got a better education. This had its effects on the music of the twenties and thirties. In this period music became more sophisticated in both the mu-

⁴⁴ Benedetti, 2004. If you want to know more about RCA Victor consult David Sarnoff's Internet library.

⁴⁵ This version can be found on the bonus CD that belongs to Plisson, 2002.

⁴⁶ This version can be found on *El Bandoneon 129*. For more examples from this period, I refer to the *El Bandoneon* series “*Homenaje a la guardia vieja del tango*”.

sical structuring and mastering of the musical instruments. The best example of this sophistication of the tango music is Julio De Caro.

In the beginning the musical line-ups of tango formations were duo's, trio's and quartets. In the eve of the First World War, the *orquesta tipica* came into existence. The *orquesta tipica*, the typical orchestra, was the dominant musical formation tango artists used till it was replaced by the *gran orquesta* in the early forties.

The first tango formations were made up of regularly changing line-ups, who performed all over town. Formations were formed on a very free basis. Ferrer points out that in this period tango music was more improvisation than imitation.⁴⁷ As a result there was a constant cross-cultural and cross regional pollination. Musicians had no choice to be flexible, which naturally implied a lot of improvising as they went along. The interaction between musicians and dancers was evident.⁴⁸ In later times this two way interaction disappeared almost completely from tango music. In the *orquesta tipicas* from the twenties and thirties and certainly the *gran orquestas* of the forties and fifties, there simply was no room for improvisation.

The duo's, trio's and quartets used the following instruments: harp, violin, guitar and flute. Sometimes the harp was replaced by mandolin or accordion. Later they are replaced by guitar, which set the harmonic structure around which violinist and flutist 'improvised'. Musicians in this period didn't confine themselves to a particular kind of music; apart from tango and milonga other kinds of music were part of their repertoire. Think about rancheras, paso dobles, foxtrots, polkas, marchas and so on.⁴⁹

Bandoneon and piano came into tango at a later stadium. They replaced guitar and flute, because of their limited possibility to produce enough sound volume. The exact date of the entrance of bandoneon and piano into tango is not known. Opinions differ about this. Most likely the bandoneon made its appearance around 1890-1910, but this could well

⁴⁷ Ferrer & Brave, 1989.

⁴⁸ Turner, 2004.

⁴⁹ Especially Francisco Canaro and Enrique Rodriguez played other contemporary folkloristic music.

have been earlier. Birkenstock & Ruegg state that the bandoneon already came to Buenos Aires in 1870.⁵⁰ A consequence of the integration of bandoneon into tango music was that, due to the technical difficulty of this instrument, the rhythms slowed down a bit.⁵¹ The piano is believed to have made its entrance in tango around 1910. There are several anecdotes about how the bandoneon, that was originally a German instrument designed for church music, found its way to Argentina, to make the instrumentation for tango complete.⁵²

One of them tells about a German sailor, who was not able to pay his bar bill and was forced to pawn his bandoneon. A compadre, who was fascinated by the bandoneon although he wasn't quite sure what it was, bought the bandoneon from the barkeeper, who might have been relieved to get rid of it, not knowing what to do with any way. After buying the bandoneon he locked himself into his room and taught himself to play the bandoneon.⁵³ Is it true or fictional? Who can tell?

However this autodidact aspect could explain that bandoneon playing in Argentina is so different from the European style.

In the beginning tango music was mainly an instrumental affair. There was some singing but not much. It usually was limited to the singing of refrains and the texts were rather simple and bawdy. The second generation in the twenties, the children of the immigrants, who often had more musical education, paid more attention to texts. The tango poets Enrique Santos Discepolo and Pascal Contursi provided tango with more mature lyrics, which were immortalized by Carlos Gardel and others.

⁵⁰ Birkenstock & Ruegg, 1999. Also note that the year the bandoneon arrived in Buenos Aires probably preceded the year in which this instrument first was used in tango.

⁵¹ Aslan, 1990.

⁵² To what extent Heinrich Band can be called the inventor of the bandoneon is an issue still open for debate. Doktorski (1998) also names a few others, such as C.F. Uhlig, from Chemnitz and C. Zimmerman from Saxon.

⁵³ Sebastian & Labrana, 1998.

8.3 Tango between the World Wars

Just before the First World War the *orquesta tipicas* started to replace the trio's and quartets, which had musically dominated the first decades of tango. In the twenties and thirties this type of orchestra was standard in tango music.

In 1911 Vincente Greco formed the first *orquesta tipica criolla*, but the *criolla* tag was soon dropped. The *orquesta tipica* formation consisted of piano, guitar, two or more violins, bass or cello and of course a pair of bandoneons.

The twenties and thirties showed a waning popularity for tango. This can be attributed to two factors. First of all, tango got more competition from other music or cultural phenomena, such as the talkies (talking movies), other Latin American music genres and jazz.

Another factor is the sophistication of tango music. There evolved a new type of tango, a more musically refined sort of tango that was quite hard to dance to. Aside the traditionalist stream in tango (Canaro, Firpo and De Angelis), there arose an evolutionary stream in tango (De Caro, Di Sarli and Troilo).⁵⁴ This 'sophistication' in tango music may well have been caused by the prospering economical period Argentina experienced in the twenties, which favoured a more elite cultural music scene.

The evolutionist school in tango, led by De Caro moved farther and farther away from the traditional dance music. Julio De Caro was a great musical innovator. He introduced in tango some new musical techniques, such as the use of polyrhythm and contrapuntal (the use of more than one rhythm at the same time without a loss of harmony), *rubato* (playing slightly around the rhythm) and *syncopé* (the suddenly and unexpectedly dropping of an accent).⁵⁵

Tango reached an impasse like state. At one side there were the traditionalists and at the other side the evolutionists (also known as the *de-carean* school of tango). This impasse was 'solved' by Juan D'Arienzo. In 1935 he formed an orchestra that became an overnight sensation. His music was to give a new impulse to music as well dance. By playing strong rhythmically arrangements of tangos dating from the early days of

⁵⁴ Collier, Cooper, Azzi & Martin, 1995.

⁵⁵ Ferrer & Brave, 1989 en Willemze, 2000.

tango, he was able to lure the dancers back to the dancehalls again. Right from the start he used faster tempos than was customary. This was a successful move that inspired other orchestra's also to speed it up.

If we take Francisco Canaro as an example, we see that his tangos in the twenties usually have rhythms that are about or just below 60 beats per minute (BPM). In the thirties it climbs to about 65 BPM and in the forties it is around 68 BPM.

8.4 La epoca de oro

The *orquesta tipicas* are the dominant musical line up until the forties. In the eve of the Second World War a new type of tango orchestra appeared on stage: the *gran orquesta*. What big bands are to jazz, *gran orquesta* are to tango.

Just like big bands, *gran orquestas* existed out of musical sections, such as a section of violins, a section of bandoneons and so on. The *gran orquestas* owed their existence to the economical boom Argentina and the rest of the continent experienced. Argentina profited in a big way from the (looming) threat of war. The export of meat and grains to Great Brittan made Argentina a very prosperous country. The saying 'as rich as an Argentine' dates from this period. The consequences for tango were enormous. *Orquestas* could employ more musicians, because there was so much money going around. Musical line-ups which more bandoneonistas and violinists became a standard. Bigger formations automatically meant more musical possibilities. The music got more and more refined. Think about intertwining melodies. This development had already set in with Julio De Caro.

In the forties the tango cantando (sung tango) became more and more popular. Extremely well talented composers, arrangers and tango poets, aided the new generation of singers, such Roberto Goyeneche, Francisco Fiorentino and Alberto Podesta. The most famous tango poets from this era are Enrique Santos Discepolo, Homero Manzi, Catulo Castillo, Homero Exposito and Enrique Cadicamo. They transformed tango lyrics from the traditional archetypal themes of love and disappointment to more 'serious' subjects like life and philosophy.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Aslan, 1990.

The average tempo of tango music slowed down a bit so that towards the end of the epoca de oro the tempo was a little slower than ten years before.

A side effect of the economic prosperity in Argentina was that in the beginning of the forties the first real dance floors appeared. The “down to earth” milonguero style almost completely disappeared and was replaced by a more artistic way of dancing.

8.5 Intermezzo

Musically the epoca de oro may have shown the greatest musical variety ever in tango’s history. Each orchestra had its own characteristic sound or ‘colour’. This colour of an orchestra was unique and clearly discernable from other orchestras. What factors contributed to the colour of an orchestra?

Aslan poses that, due to the lacking of a drum section, all the other instruments played a more or less important role in establishing the rhythmical structure. The basic four beat pattern of the tango (marcato) is the underlying theme in tango. Every tango orchestra had its own unique way of interpreting this basic pattern, which caused the different colours in tango music.⁵⁷

8.6 Tango nuevo and what came next

In the mid fifties the epoca de oro came to an end. After the tragic death of Eva Peron, Argentina met with both economic and political troubles. The thoughtlessly money spending political system lost its credit. In 1954 this regime was replaced by the military, who disliked anything Peron had been in favour of. Peron’s propagation of nationalistic values (tango), made tango suspicious to them. And also the class tango originated in was suspect. The emergence of a worldwide youth culture (rock and roll and pop music) and idols like Elvis Presley, the Beatles and the Stones also played an important part in tango’s downfall. The consequences for tango were dramatically.

Many orchestras quit or trimmed down the number of musicians. Music lost a lot of its finesse. Tango orchestras lost their place in the spotlights

⁵⁷ Aslan,1990.

to the emerging youth idols. Tango became more and more a marginal phenomenon.

In this vacuum there was opportunity to modernize tango, a phenomenon usually called tango nuevo. Astor Piazzolla was the main innovating force of tango. He mixed elements of jazz (he grew up in New York) and classical music (he studied under tutelage of Nadia Boulanger) with tango.

When you compare Piazzolla's music from the early sixties with music dating from the *epoca de oro* (and even his own music from this period!), you cannot help wondering about what a revolutionary break he made with tango as it was. The contrast between the music, that was composed specially for dancing (forties and fifties) and the complex symphonic music to listen to that Piazzolla composed, is striking.⁵⁸

Many people were disgusted with the new tango. Piazzolla was called names and threatened regularly and there even have been some fistfights with members of traditional orchestra's.⁵⁹ It is only in the seventies that Piazzolla is generally accepted when he composed 'Balada para un loco'. He was also invited to play in the Teatro Colon, which is considered one of the greatest honours bestowed to a tango musician.

In the eighties tango experiences a worldwide revival. The dance show 'Tango Argentino', musically supported by Sexteto Mayor, made a very successful tour through Europe and the United States of America. Also the tango musicians in Paris, driven from their fatherland by the military junta, gave a new impulse to tango. The music of the young guard of tango (Mosalini, Cedron and Beytelmann) is inspired by tango nuevo as well as the music from the *epoca de oro*. They quite often use older compositions and rearrange them in a modern way and in doing so, it sounds more virtuoso but also less emotionally intense. The modernization of tango music caused the more or less 'fixed' tango line-up to disappear.

In modern tango orchestras there is a multitude of line-ups and also the most exotic instrumental combinations do occur. It seemed as if everything was possible and had to be tried at least once; anything goes as

⁵⁸ As Piazzolla said himself: "For me, the tango was always for the ear rather than the feet. [...] I was taking the old tango away from them. The old tango, the one they loved was dying. And they hated me." ((Dutorski, 1998).

⁵⁹ Azzi & Collier, 2001.

they use to say in jazz. Tango didn't differ from other twentieth century's dominant musical forms, such as blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock and roll and pop music: tango also took part in the sixties and seventies in musical innovation, experiments and musical crossovers.

8.7 And now for something completely different

At the beginning of the new millennium, there is suddenly a completely new and unexpected 'sound' in tango music. Inspired by tango music (both tango nuevo and more traditional) and using all kinds of modern digital sound techniques (sampling and editing), neo tango surprises the tango scene with new and rhythmically energetic modern tango crossovers. In 2001 The Gotan Project released 'La Revancha Del Tango'. Their success inspired a lot of other musicians. Within a few years there were dozens of tango fusion like bands active, such as Narcotango and Bajofondo Tangoclub.

It is hard to define or even describe neo tango, since the social phenomenon of neo tango hasn't really crystallized yet. What can one say in general say about neo tango?

First of all, it is produced by nowadays musicians of all sorts, who have firm roots in modern and world music and who, based on their own music and musical experience, attempt to innovate tango music, in which they often (but not always) are influenced and inspired by tangos from la epoca de oro and Piazzolla's tango nuevo.

The second characteristic of neo tango is the immensely diverse way of approaching tango, where numerous fusions are made with other musical genres, such as klezmer, jazz, chansons, opera, classical music, world music and many other genres.

Thirdly, the neo tango musicians use an instrumentation which is partly the traditional tango instruments (such as: bandoneon, violin, bass and piano), but also partly new for tango, such as digital sampling techniques and instruments normally associated with world music or other non tango genres.

Finally the line up of the modern neo tango ensembles is usually very different from the traditional tango orchestras, such as *orquesta típica* and *gran orquesta*.

Neo tango seems to become more and more a permanent phenomenon in tango, which is a good thing, because it does have a refreshing effect on tango and will function as an inspiration for future generations of tango musicians.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Graaff, A. de, Neo tango is here to stay, www.torito.nl, February 2008.

9 The voices of tango

9.1 Introduction

In my opinion a tango DJ should at least have some basic knowledge about the most well know singers of tango. In this chapter we will pay attention the most important voices of tango's history, like: Alberto Podesta, Raul Beron, Angel Vargas, Charlo, Roberto Chanel, Roberto Rufino, Ada Falcon, Nelly Omar, Alberto Castillo en Tita Merello and many more.

Here you will find a short biography of each of the singers, the orchestras they joined, the role they performed and what their most memorable recordings are. The role of a singer in an orchestra can be contrasting or accentuating. Contrasting refers to a singer who clearly chooses different musical lines than the orchestra offers; accentuating means when a singers supports the music lines an orchestra offers. Examples of contrasting singers in tango are: Adriana Varela and Carlos Gardel and examples of accentuating singers are: Castillo (candombes only) and Rufino.

Furthermore we attempt to describe a singer's voice: is it lyrical or rhythmical, is it energetic or melancholy?⁶¹ We realise of course that this is a subjective activity, which is open for discussion.

And last (but certainly not least) we will discuss the relevance for tango DJ's: danceability versus undanceability.⁶² Some singers have beautiful voices (for example: Carlos Gardel and Imperio Argentina), but they are hardly danceable.

In case of other artists danceability has to do with a music genre. Alberto Castillo's tango's are not very good danceable, but his candombes are an entirely different matter! When Castillo sings a candombe, his singing is rhythmically very supportive. So: good to dance to.

⁶¹ For the description of the voices of the singers we use the same categories as have been used to describe songs. We will also give a voice typing which is customary in classical music (opera): soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto / contra alto (for female voices) and countertenor (alto or mezzo), tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, bass (for male voices). For more info on *voice type*, see Wikipedia UK.

⁶² The words danceability and undanceability are newly coined words. Danceability refers to whether a certain piece of music or singing is fit for dancing or not. Don't confuse danceability with dance ability (skills of a dancer).

A last remark on this: it is risky to talk about the danceability of a singer; the orchestra plays an equally important role in this. So feel free to disagree.

9.2 Cantores & cancionistas del tango

In this chapter we present (in alphabetical order but without having the intention to be complete) the biographies of the most famous tango singers. Carlos Gardel and other great singers who dealt only with tango canciones will not be discussed here, because their relevance for a tango DJ is almost zero.

9.2.1 Francisco Amor (1906-1972)

Amor was a multitalented person. Apart from singing, he played in movies, composed tangos (Mulita, Malambo and Cancion de junio) and also was a painter.

Amor played in Mario Scoffici's movie *Viento Norte* (1937), *Pampo y Cielo* (1938) and the documentary *Buenos Aires Canta* (1947), in which also Hugo Del Carril and Azucena Maizani appeared. When he got older and his singing ability deteriorated, he started a second career as a painter.

Amor started his professional singing career in 1935 with Florindo Sassone. After a few years he left Sassone to join Canaro, where he rose to great heights.

And although Canaro is generally regarded as a member of the traditional school in tango, he also did a lot to innovate tango music.⁶³ One of them was the introduction of two singers in his tango orchestra. This honour was bestowed on Francisco Amor and Roberto Maida. The use of two vocals enlarged the possibility to accentuate and support the melody of a song. After some time Maida left and was replaced by Ernesto Fama. The duo Amor – Fama became legendary.

After contractual disagreements with Canaro, Fama and Amor decided to start their own orchestra. The Amor – Fama orchestra made their debut in 1941 for Radio Splendid. After a tour through Uruguay they decided to disband their orchestra.

⁶³ Collier, 1995: 198.

After this it got quiet around Amor. He hardly ever stood under the spotlights anymore. In 1956 Amor performed with Fama, Roldan and Adrian in the Radio El Mundo program El Glostora Tango Club, which was hosted by Francisco Canaro. A year later he made some recordings for Antar / Telefunken with Piazzolla, Rivero and Salgan.

The most striking feature of Amor's voice is his criollo accent and his interpretational skills, which excel in his waltzes.

9.2.2 Raúl Berón (1920-1982)

Raul came from a very musical family, who all loved to sing. His sisters Elba (1930) and Rosa (1933) and his brother Jose (1918) all sang tango rioplatense. Raul however was to become by far the most famous.

With his brother Jose he made his debut in 1930. Raul became known to the general public, when he joined Calo's orchestra in 1939. During his time with Calo he made a lot of recordings. He was accompanied at Calo's orchestra by arranger Argentino Galva, violinist Enrique Mario Francini and pianist Osmar Maderna.

In 1942 his cooperation with Calo resulted in unforgettable records, such as *Al compás del corazón*, *El vals soñador*, *Entre sueños* and *Tristezas de la calle Corrientes*.

In 1943 Beron sang and acted in the movie *Toda un hombre*. In the same year he joined the Francini – Pontier orchestra. In 1949 Beron returned to Calo for a brief period. His cooperation with Calo resulted in some brilliant songs, such as *Azabache* (candombe), and *Al compas del corazon*.

In the beginning of the fifties he sang together with Jorge Casal at Troilo's orchestra. In 1957 Beron left Troilo. After this it becomes quiet around Raul Beron, although there is in 1963 a somewhat half-hearted and unsuccessful attempt to reunite Calo's orchestra from 1940 (with Francini, Pontier, Federico and Podesta).

Other orchestras in which Beron sang are Lucio Demare and Orlando Goni. Beron became known because of his interpretations of *La abandonada* and *no sabia* and (the DJ's favourite) *Que falta me haces*. Beron's voice can be described as velvety, warm and intimate; a voice suited for all moods of tango.

9.2.3 Alberto Castillo (1914-?)

Alberto Castillo was born as Alberto Salvador De Lucca. He was a talented and intelligent man. Apart from singing he also played in movies and was trained as a gynaecologist. He didn't work as a doctor for a long period. When it became known that the famous, charming singer was a gynaecologist, his practice was flooded by young female fans who wanted to be 'examined' by him. From this time on, he concentrated on his artistic career.

Castillo was already fascinated by music when he was a child. He learnt how to play violin and received singing lessons. When he was fifteen, he started to perform, thereby using several nicknames, because his father maintained a harsh discipline. In this time Castillo sang under names like Alberto Dual and Carlos Duval.

In 1934 he made his debut with Armando Neira and via Julio De Caro (1934) and Augusto Pedro Berto (1935), he landed in 1939 with dentist-pianist Ricardo Tanturi and Los Indios.⁶⁴ At this time he was still studying medicine. Tanturi meant a breakthrough for Castillo and together they made several dozens of recordings, of which the first (the valse *Recuerdo*) took place in 1941.

In 1943 Castillo splits with Tanturi to form his own orchestra, in which some prominent musicians take place: Pedro Laurenz (bandoneon) and Miguel Calo (violin).

In this time Castillo decided to add *candombes* to his repertoire. With his first *candombe* *Charol* he was very successful in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo, which led to more *candombes*, like *Siga el Baile* and *Baile de los Morenos*.

In 1946 Castillo and his orchestra performed in the tango movie *Adios Pampa*. More movies were to follow for Castillo: *El tango vuelve a París* (1948), *Un tropezón cualquiera da en la vida* (1949), *Alma de Bohemio* (1949), *La barra de la esquina* (1950), *Buenos Aires, mi tierra querida* (1951), *Por cuatro días locos* (1953), *Ritmo, amor y picardía* (1955),

⁶⁴ Augusto Pedro Berto (1889 – 1953) was an autodidact musician (guitar, mandolin, violin and bandoneon) from la vieja garde del tango. In 1913 he became famous with *Quinteto Criollo Augusto*. Berto composed *La Payanca*, *Belen*, *Sarmiento*, *Yvette* and *De Pura Yerba*. His style can be described as tango primitivo. Berto can also be seen as one of the founding fathers of tango, together with Angel Villoldo, Eduardo Arolas, Vincente Gerco and Juan "Pacho" Maglio.

Música, alegría y amor (1956), Luces de candilejas (1958) and Nubes de humo (1959)

Already at high age (in 1993) Castillo sang Siga el Baile with Los Autenticos Decadentes.⁶⁵

Castillo has an unique voice which is easy to distinguish from others. His phrasing is immaculate. According to Castillo this was what dancers needed most and he also referred to himself as a bandoneon who sang. He often sang in a critical, mocking way about the upper class.

9.2.4 Roberto Chanel (1914-1972)

Roberto Chanel was born as Alfredo Mazzochi Morsela and is best known from his singing with Pugliese and his lunfardo style of singing. Chanel was born in a musical family. His father was in Italian immigrant (from Naples), who brought his accordion with him. His three sons were taught to play guitar, which accompanied their singing. They regularly performed as a trio.

Chanel's singing career had a difficult start. He regularly participated in singing contests, where he regularly won prizes, but this didn't result in a contract with a tango orchestra. Finally he made his debut with El Cieguito Tarantino (father of pianist Osvaldo Tarantino) in the famous café Nacional. When in 1943 Mandarino and Gauthier left Pugliese, Don Osvaldo was looking for another singer. Some people suggested that the singer of the Tarantino orchestra, El Turco Mazzocchi, who at this occasion acquired the name Roberto Chanel.⁶⁶

In the same year Pugliese made several recordings with Chanel as a singer. His most famous songs with Pugliese are Farol and Corrientes y Esmeralda. After some time he left Pugliese for Sassone's outfit, with whom he made several recordings for RCA Victor. Between 1944 and 1948 he also made numerous recordings for Odeon. In 1948 he left Sassone and formed his own orchestra, which was not to last for long.

⁶⁵ Los Autenticos Decadentes is a popular 12 man Argentine band, which was formed in 1986. Their style is a mix from ska and Latin American rhythms. They are also inspired by traditional music (canzonetta and murga). On their CD Fiesta monstruo (1993) Alberto Castillo sings Siga el baile.

⁶⁶ Chanel as his artist's name was suggested by the poet Julio Jorge Nelson (author of the tango Margarita Gauthier, 1943, music by Joaquín Mora), who apparently looked at an advertisement for Chanel perfume.

9.2.5 Charlo (1905/6-1990)

Charlo was born in La Pampa as Carlos Jose Perez and moved to Buenos Aires at a later stage.⁶⁷ Historians are not certain about his exact date of birth. Charlo made his debut in the twenties, not so long after Gardel made his debut. Where Gardel chose guitars as accompanying instruments, Charlo chose for an orquesta típica. Charlo was accompanied at times by Canaro and Firpo (at the carnival in Rosario in mid twenties), Lomuto, Demare, Vardaro and Pugliese. With Canaro Charlo made some hundreds of recordings.

Apart from singing Charlo also played piano and acted as an singing actor in sainetes.⁶⁸ In 1924 Charlo started his career as a pianist and singer for Radio Cultura. Charlo was very fond of luxury and smart clothes (in which he also functioned as a trendsetter). Charlo certainly was a dandy, or a jailaife as the Argentines say.⁶⁹

Charlo studied law for some time, but was eventually lured by tango. In 1935 Charlo's career as a movie star started with *El alma del bandoneón*, which was followed a year later by *Puerto Nuevo* (1936, director: Luis Cesar Amadori) and *Carnaval de antaño* (1940, Manuel Romero).

Besides singing and acting, Charlo also composed some famous tangos like *Tormento*, the milonga *Oro y plata* (with Homero Manzi), *Rondando tu esquina* (with Enrique Cadicamo) and *Torture* (with Catullo Castillo).

Charlo sang romantic. Charlo, who came from the rural area of Argentina, was also an instrumental factor in the evolution of the improvised payades towards the structured (fixed lyrics) of the thirties.

9.2.6 Carlos Dante (1906-1985)

⁶⁷ About Charlo's original name of birth there is some confusion. Ludwig (2002) refers to Charlo as Carlos Jose Perez Urdnola. Others call him Carlos Jose Perez, sometimes with the suffix De la Riestra (which is probably made up by Charlo himself). In 1924 when he started to sing for 1924 Radio Cultura, he chose the name Charlo, which was inspired by the then immensely famous Charlie Chaplin.

⁶⁸ Sainete refers to a low one act comedy, with a vulgar character. Sainete porteno refers to the Argentinean (Buenos Aires) vulgar theatre.

⁶⁹ Jailaife is the corruption of the word high life, which stands for bourgeoisie and dandy like behavior.

Carlos Dante Testori, as his complete name was, made his debut in 1927 with Francisco Pracanico. In this period he also sang with D'Arienzo, Aieta, Caló and Maffia. With D'Arienzo he made more than thirty recordings. In 1928 he tours through the south of Europe (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Greece) with Rafael Canaro. When in Rome he has a chance encounter with the famous opera baritone Tita Ruffo, who encourages him to remain true to his style of singing, because "tango has to be said, it needs not shouting", an advice which was obviously followed by Dante.

His tour with Rafael Canaro was originally planned for only six months, but due to its enormous success, was prolonged to almost three years. It was only in 1932 that Dante returns to Buenos Aires. For some time Dante doesn't sing, because he was offered a lucrative job with an executive company. After some time the call of tango proved to be too loud. In 1937 he joined Francisco Canaro.

From 1944 onwards there follows a successful cooperation with Alfredo de Angelis, when he is asked to replace Floreal Ruiz, who joined Troilo. Dante stayed for thirteen years (!) with De Angelis, in which he sang with Julio Martel and Oscar Larroca.

Dante's most famous recordings with De Angelis are: La brisa, Lunes, Soy un arlequín and Carnaval. Towards the end of his singing career Dante forms a (short-lived) orchestra with Larocca, before he decides to quit singing at the highpoint of his career.

9.2.7 Ada Falcón (1905-2002)

Ada Falcon, who was nicknamed La Yoyita Argentina (the little jewel from Argentina) was besides one of the most famous singers of her time (thirties and forties) also a lyricist and composer. Ada Falcon was by far the most famous of the three singing Falcon sisters: Ada, Adelma and Amanda. She made her debut in 1916 as an estribilista in cafe Apollo. In 1925 she recorded her first songs. A lot of recordings were to follow in her relative short singing career. There were periods in her career that she recorded 15 songs in a month.

Falcon was of the talented generation of tango singers from the twenties which also consisted of Azucena Maizani, Rosita Quiroga, Mercedes Simone, Tita Merello and Tania. Within a few years she became one of

the most requested singers, who could demand gigantic honoraria for her singing. In the thirties she sang with the orchestras of Osvaldo Freseido and Francisco Canaro. In 1934 she performed in the movie *Idolos de la radio* (director: Eduardo Morera) with Ignacio Corsini, Dorita Davis, Tita Merello and Francisco Canaro.

The influence of her mother completely formed (or deformed) Ada Falcon's personality. She was determined that Ada should become a star. When she was five years old, she was put on stage, just like Shirley Temple. In this period she was nicknamed *La Yoyita Argentina*. She never had a normal youth. She didn't attend school, because she was educated at home to become a famous singer and movie star. All through her career Falcon was a diva, who was arrogant and tolerated the attention she got with a condescending smile, but who was also rather *weltfremd* and timid.

Ada Falcon is most of all known from her cooperation with Francisco Canaro, with whom she made nearly two hundred recordings. It goes without saying that this cooperation was problematic from time to time. They felt attracted to each other. Ada Falcon wanted to marry Canaro, who was married at that time. When the financial consequences of his divorce became clear to Canaro, his gusto for marriage disappeared rather quickly. He would lose half of his immense estate to his wife, which was something the shrewd business man Canaro couldn't accept. When Canaro's wife threatened Falcon with a pistol, their cooperation was soon disbanded.

In 1942 Falcon quite suddenly announced her retirement from the stage, just like Greta Garbo, and withdrew herself from a public life and sought refuge as a novice in a Franciscan monastery near Cordoba.⁷⁰ After this she shunned all publicity. One can guess for reasons why she quit singing so early in her career: the unhappy love for Canaro, artist's burn out, etc.

Ada Falcon was a mezzo-soprano, with a clear voice. Most of her songs are tango canciones, which are (almost by definition) not really fit for dancing. Her cooperation with Canaro did however result in some unforgettable and danceable recordings, like the valse *Corazon de oro*.

⁷⁰ After splitting up with **Francisco** Canaro, with whom she had a sentimental friendship, she decided to spend the rest of her life in a **Franciscan** monastery. Coincidence or not?

9.2.8 Ernesto Famá (1908-1984)

Fama made his debut as a professional singer in 1920 in Teatro Nacional. In 1928 he joined Fresedo's orchestra (where he replaced Sofia Bozan) and left for a long stay in Paris. Over the years a lot of tango musicians and singers visited Paris (which at time was the cultural centre of the world). To give just a few examples: Villoldo, Saborido, Alfredo Gobbi (senior) and his wife Flora Rodriguez, Osvaldo Fresedo, Francisco Canaro, Esposito and later Piazzolla stayed for some time in Paris. When Fama returned to Buenos Aires he recorded with Orquesta Típica Victor in the Victor studios. One of his most remarkable recordings from this period is Carrilón de la Mercedad.

In the beginning of the thirties (1930) Fama was part of Sexteto Típica Carlos Di Sarli, which in contrast with the later Di Sarli (after 1942) made rhythmical music.

The next stop in Fama's career was when he joined Canaro, where he reached the highpoint of his career. He stayed with Canaro until 1938 and made several recordings with him for Odeon.

In 1941 he formed the Orquesta Amor – Fama, from who apparently no recordings are left. Their cooperation didn't last long.

Despite his relatively short career Fama was a very productive singer. Mainly as an estribilista he made more than 300 recordings, of which circa 240 with Canaro's orchestra.

Apart from singing Fama also played in movies and did write and compose tangos. Other orchestra's in which he sang are: Orquesta Típica Porteña, Orquesta Típica Columbia, Juan Canaro and Alberto Gambino.

9.2.9 Francisco Fiorentino (1905-1955)

Florentino, who was also called Fiore, became famous by his voice. He sang with some of the most famous tango orchestras, like Maffia, Canaro, D'Arienzo, Troilo and Piazzolla. What is not generally known is that Fiore also was a respected bandoneon player (with Canaro in 1928), conducted his own orchestra and composed tangos.

He got his training as a bandoneon player from Enrique Di Cicco. Later he joined Francisco Canaro's orchestra, where besides from bandoneon he also started to sing refrains (estribillista). In the middle of the twenties he formed his own orchestra, which was disbanded after some time.

At the beginning Fiorentino spent some time in Europe (Germany). When he returned to Buenos Aires he joined Roberto Zerrillo's orchestra and he also hosted a radio program for radio Belgrano and Radio Argentina.

With Zerrillo Fiorentino recorded in 1934 *Serenata de amor*, which was the first recording where a complete lyric was sung (instead of a refrain). By doing so Fiorentino was instrumental in the disappearing art of *estribilistas* and the rise of the orchestral singer, who claimed (and got) an equal role in an orchestra.

From 1937 till 1944 Fiorentino sang with Troilo. This is probably the highpoint of his career. Troilo's orchestra provided Fiorentino with a musical background an opportunity to marvel everybody who heard him.

Besides Canaro and Zerrillo Fiorentino also made recordings with Firpo, Maffia, D'Arienzo, Mancione and Basso.

After leaving Troilo his career stagnated. In 1951 Fiorentino moved to Uruguay where he joined the pianist José Adolfo Puglia and bandoneonista Edgardo Pedroza.

9.2.10 Raúl Iriate (1916-1982)

Raul Iriate, born as Rafael Fiorentino, started his career as a refrain singer in the thirties in several radio programs, mostly accompanied by guitar. Forced by the popularity of Francisco Fiorentino, he chose as an artist's name Raul Iriate. In 1937 he made his debut with Enrique Forte, after which he became well known when he joined Miguel Caló's *Orquesta de las Estrellas*. When in 1943 Podesta left Caló for Di Sarli, Iriate was to replace him.

Caló's line up at the time when Iriate joined proves how well chosen the name *Orquesta de las Estrellas* was: Osmar Maderna (piano), Enrique Mario Francini, Aquiles Aguilar, Antonio Bogas and Mario Lalli (all violin), Domingo Federico, Armando Pontier, José Cambareri and Felipe Richiardi (all bandoneon) and Armando Caló (double bass).

In 1945 Caló's star orchestra was drained when Maderna, Federico, Francini and Pontier started their own orchestra's. Thanks to Iriate and Beron, Caló managed to hold on to its quality.

In 1947 Iriate leaves Calo to pursue a solo career. In 1948 he makes his debut for Radio Belgrano, where he is accompanied by bandoneonista Ismael Spiltanik.

Iriate not only enjoyed a great popularity in Argentina but also in the rest of Latin America. In 1950, when the golden age of tango is already losing its colour, Iriate tours through Chili, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico and Colombia (where he finally settles down). In the mid fifties he makes another very successful tour through Latin America and Cuba.

A short time before the death of his old maestro Miguel Calo Iriate returns to Buenos Aires to make some recordings with Calo.

In his last years Iriate mainly concentrated on organizing tours for other artists and homage festivals for Carlos Gardel in Medelin, Columbia. Iriate sang baritone, with a pained undertone.

9.2.11 Oscar Larroca (1922-1976)

Larrocca (real name: Oscar Antonio Moretta) started to play guitar at an early age. In his teens he also started to sing, which got him through some hard times.

In the early forties he performed for a few years for the daily radio show *La famosa matinée de Juan Manuel*.

In 1944/45 he sang with Domingo Federico's orchestra, where he recorded several dozens of songs. At Federico's he sings with Carlos Vidal.

In 1948 he leaves Federico when Manzi asks him to join his orchestra and sing with Roberto Ray. Together they make their debut at Radio Belgrano and are an instant success. Unfortunately Manzi's orchestra disintegrates at the end of 1949. After a short intermezzo with Roberto Calo he joins the orchestra of Alfredo De Angelis in 1951, with whom he rises to great heights.

The reason for joining De Angelis was Julio Martel's departure. Larrocca and Dante went along well and soon they make their debut at Radio El Mundo's *El Glostora Tango Club*. In the autumn of his career (1958) he forms his own orchestra with Carlos Dante. They toured quite successfully through Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. In 1959/60 however they decided to go their own ways. Tango by then suffered a crisis and North American music started to dominate the Argentinean music market.

Opportunities for performances became less for Larroca and Dante, so they decided to split up. Larroca has a baritone voice.

9.2.12 Julio Martel (1923-?)

Martel (whose real name was Julio Pedro Harispe) made his debut when he was still a minor with Giordano's orchestra, but his great fame he achieved while collaborating with Alfredo de Angelis, which lasted from 1943 to 1951.

In 1943 Martel auditioned for Alfredo de Angelis. It was at this occasion that his artist's name was launched by Nestor Rodi, who just happened to order a glass of Martel cognac. The same year Martel made his first recording (*Qué buena es*) with de Angelis. As a soloist or together with Carlos Dante more than sixty recordings were to follow.

In 1946 Radio El Mundo invited Martel to sing in the radio program *El Glostora Tango Club*, which was broadcasted just before a popular soap.

Julio Martel also performed in several tango movies, such as *El Cantor del Pueblo* (1948) and *El Idolo del Tango*. In 1951/52 Martel left De Angelis to tour through Uruguay, where he also sang for radio and television programs. After living for several years in Colombia Martel returned to Buenos Aires, where he ended his carrier in 1959 and spent his time on his farm, enjoying his royalties.

Martel's voice can be described as a manly baritone. His cooperation with Dante is famous. Julio Martel's younger brother also sang (on several occasions with the De Angelis orchestra) and used the artist's name Lalo Martel.

9.2.13 Tita Merello (1904-?)

Laura Ana Merello sang from a very early age, first in sainetes and later (from 1923 onwards) in cabarets. When still very young her mother abandoned her, which led to a life on the streets of Buenos Aires. Life on the street (hunger, criminality, poverty and prostitution) caused an enormous drive to live and become successful.

In fact when Merello sings, she sings about her own life. Although she was really material for a singer (difficulty in keeping pitch), the audience

accepted and appreciated the emotions she put in her singing enormously.

In the early twenties Merello started to appear as a singer in revues and cabarets. She also played as an actress in theatre productions, like *El rancho del herman* (director: Claudio Martinez Paiva) and *El conventillo del Paloma* (director: Alberto Vacarezza).

In 1925 she made her debut as a tango singer. Her first recordings date from 1929. From 1932 she sang with Ernesto Ponzio's outfit and later on with Canaro's, with who she made countless recordings for Odeon. The highpoint of her theatre career was Eduardo de Filippo's *Filomena Marturano*, a play which had an uninterrupted run of two years and which was later filmed by Luis Mottura.

In the thirties her attention shifted towards the movies. She became a great actress in several tango orientated movies, like *Tango* (1933, director: Luis Moglia Barth), *Idolas de la Radio* (1934) and *Asi es el Tango* (1937).⁷¹ Her most famous movies date from a later period: *Arrabalera* (1950) and *Gaucha* (1953).

In 1954 she returns to the recording studio to sing with Francisco Canaro, which results in unforgettable songs like *Se dice de mí*, *Arrabalera* and *Niño bien*.

The revolution in 1955 complicated her life enormously, as it did with countless other artists, who were associated with the Peron regime. A few years later Merello moves to Mexico, where she played in the TV version of Eugene O'Neill's *Before Breakfast*.

When she returns to Buenos Aires the public has almost completely forgotten her, although she makes a few recordings in the sixties with Hector Varela and Carlos Figari. Merello didn't have a voice of great quality; the register she was able to sing was fairly limited.

9.2.14 Nelly Omar (1911-?)

Nilda Elvira Vattuone, which was Nelly Omar's original name, successfully auditioned at a folkloristic group *Cenizas del fogón* and made her debut for Radio Rivadavia in 1924. In the early thirties she formed together with her sister Nelida a vocal duo, which mainly sang folk music

⁷¹ The movie *Tango* (1933) was the first Argentine talking movie (talkie). In this movie Merello sings with Merello Maizani, Lamarque and Simone and was accompanied by the orchestras of Maffia, Fresedo, Donato and De Dios Filiberto.

(milongas, criollo songs and rancheras) for Radio Rividavia and Radio Mayo. In 1937 Omar wins the popularity poll which was organized by Caras y Caretas magazine. In 1942 she is honoured by the SADAIC with a medal and receives the honorary title *La voz dramática del tango*.⁷²

In 1938 Omar is announced at a concert as *La Gardel con polleras*, the Gardel with a dress. This nickname, which Omar abhorred, will stick with her for a long time. In the following years she sang with other great vocalists like Libertad Lamarque and Agustín Magaldi. Despite her great fame Omar didn't make a great number of recordings. Female voices weren't very interesting for record companies, which can very well be caused by the poor recording techniques of that time. The high registers (more than 4-6 kHz were very hard to record, which caused many female voices to sound rather harsh.

At the beginning of the forties Omar stars in two movies: *Canto de amor* (1940) en *Melodías de América* (1942). In 1946 Omar joins Canaro's orchestra, which results in some great recordings for Odeon, such as *Desde el Alma en Nobleza de Arrabal*, *Adiós pampa mía*, *Canción desesperada en Sentimiento gaucho*.

When in 1955 the Peron regime is overthrown by *Revolución Libertadora*, Nelly Omar becomes a *persona non grata*. Although she claimed not to be politically involved, she felt great sympathies for Evita and Juan Peron and did perform on their propagandistic parties.

Like so many other tango artists she tries her luck in other Latin America countries, like Uruguay and Venezuela. With little luck however, and the public attention she receives diminishes over the years. At the end of the seventies Omar makes some recordings with Roberto Grela and in 1997 (at the age of 86) she records a CD. Her voice still sounded young and her phrasing is immaculate.

9.2.15 Alberto Podestá (1924-?)

If you start to look for info on Alberto Podesta, you will find that there is more than one Podesta: Antonio Domingo Podestá Torterolo, Maria Esther Podestá del Pomar and Martin Podestá. And there was also at the

⁷² SADAIC is an acronym for *Sociedad Argentina de Autores y Compositores de Música*. SADAIC is a union for musicians and composers, which was founded in 1955 by Francisco Canaro and others.

end of nineteenth century a circus with acrobats led by the brothers Podesta. In Podesta's circus folkloristic music played an important role.⁷³

If they are related with Alberto Podesta is vague, but not very likely. For certain, however, is that he stems from a musical family with a long lineage of artists.

Podesta made his debut in the thirties at Radio Emisora. After some odd jobs, he was invited in 1939 by Roberto Calo to join Miguel Calo's Orquesta de las Estrellas. There he meets Armando Pontier and Enrique Mario Francini, who become friends for life. His first recordings with Calo are made under another name: Juan Carlos Morel, because there are already other artists with the surname Podesta. When he joins Carlos Di Sarli in 1942, el señor del tango advises him to call himself Alberto Podesta, because Di Sarli is (correctly) convinced that he will overshadow all the other Podesta's. Next year Podesta left to join Pedro Laurenz's orchestra. In 1945 he teamed up with his friends Francini and Pontier.

In 1955 Podesta made a long tour through Colombia. After his return to Buenos Aires, Podesta did some performances in theatre and on television, but he gradually drops from sight.

The list of song Podesta made famous is sheer endless. For example, with Calo he sang *Que falta me haces*, with Di Sarli *Al compás del corazón*, with Laurenz *Alma de Bohemio* and with Francini – Pontier *El milagro*. Podesta never sang with Troilo, although there have been some contact between the two.

9.2.15 Roberto Ray (1912-1960)

Roberto Ray (real name: Roberto Raimondo) started to sing when he was still in high school, which resulted in his nickname *el alummo canto* (the singing student). Ray made his debut in Cafe Angora. In 1932 he made his debut as an *estribilista* with Francisco Canaro. After this Ray sang with Fresedo, with whom he recorded for Victor and Columbia. In 1939 he left Fresedo to start his own orchestra with lyricist, composer and bandleader José María Rizzuti.

In 1948 Ray returns tot Osvaldo Fresedo. Roberto Ray's star rose in the period that the *estribillista* made place for the orchestral singer. The *estribillista* had always taken a second place to the musicians. When time

⁷³ See Chasteen (2004:54).

passed the singers got more and a more important function in the orchestra. The audience began to show an increasing interest in the singers and what they sang. The record companies noticed this and gave the public what it wanted. Another accidental fact is that in the thirties and forties a lot of fantastic singers appeared on stage who claimed, deserved and got more artistic freedom. Also the lyrics of this period were great. All the conditions for the rise of the orchestral singers were present.

Ray's greatest hits were Sollozos, Aromas, Niebla del Riachuelo and of course, the unforgettable Vida mía. Ray was a tenor, with an excellent diction.⁷⁴

9.2.16 Carlos Roldán (1913-1973)

Carlos Roldán (real name Carlos Belarmino Porcal) already showed an interest for singing when he was a child. When he was still young, he sang (in short pants) the refrains in Américo Pioli's orchestra. Radio América asked to sing in 1932. A year later he started to sing with Los Ceibos for Radio Oriental.

In the years to follow Roldan travelled Argentina (with Buenos Aires as his home base) and Montevideo. In 1936 and 1937 he sang for Radio Fenix and Radio Belgrano. In 1938 he sang a duet with Mercedes Simone, in which they were accompanied by the Pedro Maffia orchestra. He was on his way to fame.

In 1939 Roldan excels in the radio series El Tango Del Oro, which is organised by Radio Belgrano. He is musically accompanied by Roberto Zerrillo and Roberto Firpo. When in 1941 Ernesto Fama and Francisco Amor leave Canaro's outfit, Canaro chooses Roldan and Eduardo Adrian as his new singers. In 1943 they record the unforgettable Sonar Y Nada Mas, a must for every tango DJ. Other great hits of Roldan are the milongas La Milonga De Mis Perros and Soy un porteño. Also Carlos Roldan's candombes are interesting for tango DJ's.

Until 1945 Roldan sang with Francisco Canaro. This period is Roldan's highpoint in his career. He leaves Canaro to form his own orchestra with pianist José Pascual, a cooperation which didn't last long.

From 1945 to 1949 Roldan resides in Montevideo, where he performs with Emilio Pellejero. In 1949 Rotundo asks him to return to Buenos

⁷⁴ Diction is (according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary) the manner of enunciation (pronunciation) in singing.

Aires. In the fifties he does perform with Roberto Caló (1952/1953) and Miguel Caló (1956).⁷⁵ Carlos Roldan had a dark timbered voice.

9.2.17 **Roberto Rufino (1922-1999)**

In 1937 Rufino made his debut as an estribillista (a singer who only sings refrains and not complete songs) with Orquesta Típica Antonio Boavena. Because of his young age, Rufino is nicknamed el pibe del Albaseto (the kid from Albaseto). Next year he is discovered by Carlos Garay, who is Carlos Di Sarli's agent. From 1939 he sings (with a few interruptions) for Carlos Di Sarli, with whom he records numerous songs for Victor. At a young age he can already boast of a respectable number of recordings he made. In 1949 Rufino join Francini – Pontier and later Caló and Anibal Troilo (1964).

Undoubtedly Rufino's best years were with Di Sarli, Caló and Francini – Pontier. His recordings with Francini – Pontier are not so good danceable (too complex), but this has nothing to do with his singing. His recordings with Troilo in the early sixties are also not very interesting for dancers (the singing and the music was rather theatrical). Other more or less well known orchestras Rufino participated in are "Cieguito" Camilo Tarantini, José "Natalín" Felipetti, Anselmo Aieta, Francisco Rosse, Roberto Caló, Alfredo Fanuele (1941), Emilio Orlando (1942) and Raul Garello.

Under the artist's name Bobby Terré, Rufino sang masked for an audience. This episode of his career wasn't very successful however. Although his voice deteriorated and his memory failed him sometimes, Rufino kept performing until his death. Sometimes his audience had to prompt the lyrics. A few years before he died in 1999, Rufino was granted the title of honorary citizen of Buenos Aires.

Rufino's singing can be characterized as storytelling, with perfect phrasing and interpretation, a singer who knew very well what he was singing.⁷⁶ Besides singing Rufino also composed some songs, such as Boliche, Novio del suburbio, Destino de flor, El bazar de los juguetes and Manos adoradas.

⁷⁵ Roberto and Miguel Caló are brothers. The Caló family is a musical one, because also their other brothers Juan, Salvador, Antonio and Armando are musicians.

⁷⁶ Phrasing refers to perform a composition in such a way that the structure and the rhythm are clearly shown.

9.2.18 Floreal Ruiz (1916-1978)

Ruiz made his debut in 1936 on Radio Prieto and switched to the also in Buenos Aires based Radio Argentina. He is generally recognized as one of the best (if not the best) singers from la época de oro. He sang with some of the most famous orchestra's of his time: De Angelis, Troilo en Rotundo.

It did take however some time for him to achieve fame, which is not surprising for he had the tremendous task to replace Fiorentino at Troilo's orchestra. Besides that, the forties was an period of harsh competition between a lot of excellent singers.

Floreal Ruiz was the son of an anarchist, who kicked him out of his house, because he didn't tolerate a singer under his roof. Years later, when Ruiz had become famous, father and son were reconciled.

In 1938 Ruiz sang (under the name Fabián Conde) with Jose Otero's orchestra, with whom he also made some recordings. In 1943 Ruiz joined Alfredo de Angelis and his orchestra. With De Angelis he recorded some songs, of which Marionetta is the most widely known.

In 1944 Troilo contracted Ruiz (on request of Alberto Marino), which resulted in some of tango history's fines recordings: Naranja en flor, Flor de lino and Romance de barrio. In 1948 Ruiz left Troilo for Rotundo, who made him a better financial offer. In 1955 he switched to Jose Basso.

In the sixties, when the golden age of tango had become history, Ruiz does make a few dozens of recordings with Jorge Dragone, Luis Stazo, Osvaldo Requena and the Raúl Garello led Orquesta Típica Porteña. Although Ruiz's voice stayed intact until the end (which is remarkable) these recordings can't match his recordings with De Angelis and Troilo. Floreal Ruiz was a subtle singer with an excellent but also dramatic way of phrasing the lyrics he sang.

9.2.19 Angel Vargas (1904-1959)

Angel Vargas (real name: José Angel Lomio Michelli) became famous when singing for Angel D'Agostino. The recordings of the two Angel's are superb. His career started in the early thirties. After singing in bars and movie theatres in the neighbourhood he lived in, he mad his official

debut in 1932 with the Lando – Matino orchestra in Cafe Marzotto. Under the name Carlos Vargas he made his debut with Augusto Pedro Berto. In 1932 he meets D'Agostino and sings with him a few times. In 1938 he sings as an estribillista with Orquesta Tipica Victor.⁷⁷

In 1940 the Vargas and D'Agostino renew their musical friendship. Vargas will sing with the D'Agostino outfit until 1946. This will be the best period in his career, which results in almost hundred recordings.

In 1946 Vargas forms his own orchestra which is alternatingly led by the bandoneonista Eduardo del Piano, Edelmiro D'Amario, Luis Stazo en José Libertella and pianist Armando Lacava. Angel Vargas can be described as an orchestral singer, who fitted perfectly in whatever orchestra he sang. Together with the tandem Troilo – Fiorentino the duo D'Agostino – Vargas can be ranked as the top of the golden age of tango.

9.3 Observations & conclusions

While studying the singers I just described some things struck me.

9.3.1 Francisco Canaro as a key figure

Remarkably many singers sang at one time or other with Francisco Canaro's orchestra. Of course this has to do with Canaro's long span of musical activity from 1916 till 1965?, but also Canaro's intuitive feeling for what the public wanted made sure he contracted the best singers of his time.⁷⁸ The list of singers who sang with Canaro is sheer endless: Carlos Gardel, Agustin Magaldi, Ignacio Corsini, Alberto Castillo, Charlo, Edmundo Rivero, Hugo Del Carril, Jorge Vidal, Oscar Alonso,

⁷⁷ In the thirties and forties most of the record companies had their own studio orchestra. Besides Orquesta Tipica Victor there were also Orquesta Tipica Brunswick, Quinteto Criolla Atlanta, Orquesta Tipica Columbia and many others. The record labels Victor, Odeon and Columbia were the leaders in the market, but there were also numerous small record labels.

⁷⁸ It is not surprising that Francisco Canaro is one of the most important key figures in (traditional) tango. He was a very smart businessman, who (with the help of his four brothers Rafael, Juan, Humberto and Mario) managed to build up a family tango empire (music and movies). Furthermore Francisco Canaro's role in founding the SADAIC (Sociedad Argentina de Autores y Compositores de Música) was enormous.

Alberto Marino, Horacio Deval, Angel Vargas, Guillermo Rico, Carlos Lombardi, Carlos Roldan, Eduardo Adrian, Alberto Gomez en Hector Maure (all male singers) en Libertad Lamarque, Ada Falcon, Mercedes Simone, Rosita Quiroga, Nelly Omar, Sofia Bozan, Tita Merello, Tania, Chola Luna, Carmen Duval, Carmen Del Moral en Maria De La Fuente (all female singers).

9.3.2 Tango families

Quite often tango was a family affair. The Canaro family is perhaps the most widely known example, but there are more examples.

Adolfo Pugliese was the father of Osvaldo and Alberto Pugliese. Father Adolfo (flute) formed with pianist Luis Suarez Campos an instrumental group, which performed in the then famous restaurant Hansen.^{79 80} Brother Alberto played with Juan Maglio, Agisilao Ferrazzano and Roberto Firpo. Osvaldo Pugliese's daughter Beba is the third generation of this musical family.

Furthermore there were the sisters Ada, Adelma and Amanda Falcon, father Alfredo de Angelis and daughter Gigi, the brothers Julio and Lalo Martel, the sisters Nilda Elvira (Nelly) and Nelida Omar and father and son Alfredo Gobbi.

9.3.3 Long careers

Not only Canaro had a very long musical career. He made his debut in 1906 with a trio and his first recordings are from 1916. Until his death in 1964 he was active in music.

There are quite a lot of well known tango musicians who were active for forty years or more. Osvaldo Pugliese, Astor Piazzolla and Charlo are just a few examples of forty years or more in tango.

⁷⁹ Restaurant Hansen or Lo de Hansen in the barrio Palermo was an important place in the early history of tango. It was a mixture between a restaurant, a dance-hall and a brothel. Juan Hansen started Hansen in 1875 or 1877. Hansen meant expensive eating and dancing in a discrete environment. In 1912 Lo de Hansen had to make way for a railroad. Some of the most famous tango artists from la vieja guardia del tango performed in Hansen; for example: Rosendo Mendizabel (El Enterriano) and later Roberto Firpo.

⁸⁰ Adolfo (father) composed some 'primitive' tangos and vales (Mi Amor, Portenita and Recuerdos), which were later interpreted by his son Osvaldo.

Osvaldo Pugliese made his debut in 1924 with Paquita Bernardo's Orquesta Tipica. Bernardo was the first female bandoneonista. Unfortunately no recordings of Bernardo were made. Pugliese performed until his death in 1995.

Astor Piazzolla career started in 1931 in New York when he met Carlos Gardel. In the same year they performed together and Piazzolla played a brief role in Gardel's movie *El Dia Que Me Quieras*. Piazzolla was invited by Gardel to join him on his 1935 tour through Latin America, because Piazzolla's father thought he was too young for that. This was the tour where Gardel died in a plane crash in Medellin. Piazzolla was musically active until he suffered a stroke in 1990, which left him in an irreversible coma.

Charlo's singing career started in 1924 and lasted till the end of the seventies.

9.3.4 Payador, estribillista, cantor

Most of the singers we dealt with started their career as an estribillista (a singer of refrains) and worked their way up to the more prominent role of the orchestral singer (cantor). In the history of tango the role of the singer underwent some tremendous changes. This could very well be caused by the 'standardization' of tango argentino in the twentieth century.

Roughly you can distinguish three types of tango singers: payador, estribillista and cantor. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century the call of Buenos Aires was loud. Many payadores, gaucho and other rural workers took to the big city to make a fortune. They brought their rural culture with them and over time adapted it to the urban culture, and by doing so influence the urban culture.

At first the singing was not considered to be very important. Many tangos were without lyrics and if there were lyrics it were mostly refrains with rather vulgar lyrics of an improvisational character.

In the first decades of the twentieth century tango's structure gets more and more standardized. The more or less loosely operating amateur duo's and trio's expand to (semi) professional orquesta tipica's. With this the free improvising character of tango music and lyrics faded away. Lyr-

ics are put to paper in a refrain format and sung at the end of a song mostly.

With *Mi Noche Triste* Gardel started the tango canción genre. After this the orchestra singer, who sang 'complete' lyrics instead of refrains, slowly took the place of the estribillistas. The role of the singer was recognized in the orchestra as an equal to the other instruments. And by doing so the singer got more artistic freedom.

9.3.5 Nicknames

A lot of tango artists (musicians and singers) didn't perform under their own name. The list of aliases and nicknames is very long. Why all these nicknames and aliases?

There are several explanations for this phenomenon:

- the original names are too long or too complicated (difficult to remember or too hard to pronounce)
- on arriving in Buenos Aires as immigrants a lot of names are misspelled or shortened by the immigration services. Canaro was short for Canarazano.
- it is normal for artists to have an artist's name. The role of Hollywood stars changing their names is clear.
- tango was seen by many as 'a reptile from the brothels' and therefore as something a civilised person didn't want to be involved with. To protect their own reputation (and their family's of course) many tango artists sang under another name. Some of them came out of the closet when they were very well known, but also many didn't.

9.3.6 The new media: radio and the movies

Many singers and musicians didn't confine themselves to just one form of art or only one medium of communication. They sang for radio but also live, played in movies, composed songs and wrote lyrics for the songs. Many singers started their careers at the radio, which was in the thirties one of the most important medias. When asked if tango would have been so popular without radio and movie, the answer is: most likely not.

In the forties tango was immensely popular. Radio executives were eager to include tango orchestras in their programs. Radio El Mundo was the

radio station to start the tango program Ronda de Ases, which was aired from Teatro Casino. A lot of great names appeared on this show: Tanturi with Castillo, D'Agostino with Vargas, Di Sarli with Rufino, D'Arienzo with Mauré, Fresedo with Serpa and Troilo with Fiorentino.

In 1946 Radio El Mundo launched a new tango program: El Glostora Tango Club. The Glostora company sponsored this program to promote their hair gel. In the 15 minute daily program, which was aired continuously for 22 years a vast array of the greatest from tango history appeared: Francisco Canaro, Ricardo Tanturi, Miguel Caló, Juan D'Arienzo, Armando Pontier, Alfredo Gobbi, Enrique Mario Francini, Rodolfo Biagi, Osvaldo Pugliese and Donato Racciatti.

When radio was being replaced by television in the sixties and tango's heydays were over, El Glostora Tango Club was stopped.

9.3.7 The end of la epoca de oro

In the early fifties la epoca de oro, the golden age of tango neared its end. The popularity of tango melted like ice on a hot summer day. This was caused by the economic situation, the political instability and the youth culture.

Artists deal in different ways with this fading away popularity. Some orchestras disbanded and pursued other careers. Others, like Alberto Podesta, Libertad Lamarque, Nelly Omar, Francisco Fiorentino, Julio Martel and Raul Iriarte, decide to shift their focus of attention to other countries in Latin America who were less intensive orientated to western culture (Argentina is and was by far the most 'European' country in Latin America) or tried to adapt themselves to the changing musical taste in Argentina.

9.3.8 Unsuccessful spin offs

Although the golden age of tango contained an immense and almost incredible accumulation of musical talents, not all initiatives were successful. Some of the great singers decided at one time or other to go solo, which was often resulted in a failure or wasn't the success they had hoped for.

Francisco Amor and Ernesto Fama, Roberto Chanel, Carlos Dante and Oscar Larroca, Francisco Fiorentino, Roberto Ray, Carlos Roldan and

Angel Vargas were all great singers, but met with little success when they formed their own orchestras, which (in most situations) didn't last for very long.

10 The tango poets

10.1 Introduction

Tangos music contain from time to time fascinating lyrics, sometimes they are sad and nostalgic, sometimes they are exuberant and happy, sometimes they are downright corny and every once in a while they are even critical of the society they originated in. As tango is an expression of a society that has been (and still is) changing enormously, also the lyrics evolved through time.

The history of tango knows some outstanding poets who left us unforgettable tango lyrics. This chapter deals with some of the most remarkable tango poets, such as Eladia Blazquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Enrique Cadicamo, Catulo Castillo, Jose González Castillo, Pascual Contursi, Enrique Santos Discépolo, Homero Expósito, Horacio Ferrer, Celedonio Flores, Alfredo Le Pera, Homero Manzi and Luis Rubistein.

In this chapter we will give some info on those poets: a short biography, some their most important lyrics and an attempt to characterize their work. We will deal with the poets do in alphabetical order.

10.2 Eladia Blazquez (1931 – 2005)

The singer musician (guitar and piano) Eladia Blazquez became most of known by the lyrics she wrote. At the age of eight she made her debut on radio as a musician. When she is eleven years old, she composes a bolero (*Amor imposible*) of a remarkable quality.

When she started singing she mainly sang folkloristic music, but in the sixties she started to shift her focus more and more towards tango. In the sixties, when the tango as a musical genre seemed to be disappearing, she wrote tango lyrics like *A Catullo Castillo* (1964) and (together with Astor Piazzolla) *Adios nonino*. In the seventies and eighties other well known lyrics, like *El corazón al sur* (1970), *Mi ciudad y mi gente* (1970), *Contame una historia* (1982) and *Sin Piel* were to follow. In 1971 Blazquez performs in *Caño 14* with Hector Stamponi, Alfredo Marconi and Omar Murtagh.⁸¹

⁸¹ Omar Murtagh (1930 - ?) played bass with Los Provincianos (Ciraquito Ortiz), Francisco Rotundo, Dino Saluzzi and Quinteto Real.

Blazquez's nickname is (with some exaggeration) *la Discépolo con faldas* (*Discepolo with skirts*). This may have something to do with her sharp, critical lyrics in which she describes contemporary subjects in ditto language. Her texts often deal with the melancholy, hope and frustrations of everyday life in Buenos Aires.

In 1970 she makes her first LP, on which she sings her own compositions. One of this compositions is *Sueño de barrilete* (*Dream of a Kite*), a song she already composed in 1959.

10.3 Jorge Luis Borges (1899 – 1986)

The writer-poet Jorge Luis Borges was born in Buenos Aires in 1899. He grew up in Palermo, at that time a *barrio* with a very bad reputation. The bibliophile and nearsighted child Borges didn't go outside very much. He was tutored at home and only went to school when he was already eleven years old.

As he was blessed with a great intelligence, glasses and a feeling of superiority, he became the focus of the school bullies. More than once he was forced to defend himself to physical attacks.

In 1914, when his parents decided to go to Geneva in Europe, he was saved from a bad time at school. The start of the first world war, their stay was more permanent than they originally had planned. During his stay in Europe, which was to last till 1921, he got familiar with modern literature (symbolism and ultraism) and philosophy (Schopenhauer).

In the mid twenties Borges published his first poems. The thirties turned out to be a dark period in Argentine's and Borges's personal history. There was a world wide economical depression. Argentina's thirties are also referred to as *la década infama*. In this period Borges worked in the municipal library, where he was delegated to do the classification and categorization of books. This was a very simple task for a man with his intelligence, which left him with a lot of spare time to read.

In the forties Borges became interested in politics, although he didn't really choose sides. Despite this, his involvement in politics caused him troubles. In 1946 Peron came to power and he 'promoted' Borges till market inspector, after which Borges immediately resigned.

After this it slow got better and better with Borges. He was invited to do lectures in Argentina and Venezuela. In 1950 he was elected as president

of the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (SADE, Argentine Writers Committee).

After Peron was removed from power in la revolucion libertadore, he was appointed as chairman of the national library. Two years later he was nominated as professor in literature at the university of Buenos Aires. This appointment was the begin of Borges's travels around the world and giving lectures (as a visiting professor) an to receive literary prizes.

In the sixties Borges makes his international breakthrough when he (together with Samuel Beckett) wins the International Publisher's Prize. When Peron returns for a short while to Argentina, Borges's fame is already so impressive that he is relatively free from persecution by the Peron regime.

In the last years of his life he makes his last great travels (Iceland, Japan and finally Switzerland), publishes a last collection of poems, before he dies of liver cancer in 1986, just after his marriage with his faithful companion of his last years Maria Kodama.

As a tango poet, Borges is an exceptional figure in the tango scene. His attitude towards tango is ambivalent, to say the least.

From one point of view he was interested by the phenomenon; he wrote about it, gave lectures on tango and in the sixties he wrote some tangos and milongas, which were put to music by Astor Piazzolla. The other side of the medal is that tango irritated him. He had a great dislike of Orquesta Tipica de Juan De Dios Filiberto (too sentimental) and was modern tango like Piazzolla something completely beyond him.

Borges has been involved in tango at several times of his life. In 1930, at the beginning of his career as a writer, he wrote 'Evaristo Carriego'; which started as a story on the poet Evaristo Carriego but turned out to be a historical description of Buenos Aires when he finished it. The fore last chapter was entirely devoted to tango. This book was only published in 1953.

In 1965 Borges wrote some poems, which were meant to be sung as a tango. The most well known tango poems of Borges are Alguien le dice al tango, El títere and Jacinto Chiclana.

In 1966 Piazzolla added music to the poems. Borges was not a very musical person, who couldn't appreciate Piazzolla's tango nuevo. His musical preference was Brahms, gospel and jazz, but when he did listen to

tango it was more likely to be traditional tango (especially milongas) than modern tango.

10.4 Enrique Cadicamo (1900 – 1999)

Enrique Cadicamo, whose daughter Monica Cadicamo was also active as a tango singer, is without doubt one of the most famous tango poet in the history of tango.

Enrique Cadicamo, son of a butler, made his debut in 1926 with a collection of poems *Canciones Grises*, which was followed in 1940 *La Luna del Bajo Fondo*.⁸² He wrote 23 lyrics especially for Carlos Gardel, among which *Al subir - al bajar*, *Che papusa, oi* and *El Lloron*.

Other well known lyrics by Cadicamo are *Luna de Arrabal*, *Compadron*, *El Cantor de Buenos Aires*, *Garua*, *Los Mareados*, the milonga *Mano Bravo* and *Nostalgias*.

His lyrics have been used by nearly all the great tango singers and orchestras of his time: Rosita Quiroga, Carlos Gardel, Rodolfo Biagi, Alberto Castillo, Francisco Canaro, Charlo, Sofia Bozan, Angel Vargas and Anibal Troilo. Cadicamo was a very productive poet. When he died in 1999 he left circa 1300 poems.

10.5 Catulo Castillo (1906 – 1975)

Catulo Castillo was a son of writer/poet Jose Gonzalez Castillo, who also contributed to tango history. The precocious Catulo Castillo started to play piano at an early age in a trio, with whom he traveled to Europe in 1928. Together with Juan Francisco Giacobbe and Carlos Malerba he performed in Spain and Portugal. From 1938 onwards he dedicated himself solely to writing lyrics for others.

He became known by his lyrics *Maria* and *Café de los Angelitos* and *Organita de la Tarde* (a co production with his father).⁸³

Castillo's themes were often rather melancholic: nostalgia, disappointed love and the transience of life. There was no place for humor in his lyrics and in his life. When he got older, he also grew more and more mel-

⁸² At the beginning of his career as a poet (circa 1918), he used the pseudonym Rosendo Luna.

⁸³ Maybe *Maria* is his most well know tango lyric. It was premiered by the singer Francisco Fiorentino in 1945, accompanied by the legendary Troilo orchestra.

ancholy. Maybe he foresees his own end in *La última curda*. It is ironic that in this period (end of forties, early fifties) his popularity reaches its highest point.

Catulo Castillo cooperated with many well known musicians, like Charlo, Atilio Stampone, Osmar Maderna, Osvaldo Pugliese, Sebastian Piana and Pedro Maffia. Except musician and composer, Castillo was also a talented pugilist, who was at one time boxing champion of Argentina.

10.6 Jose González Castillo (1885- 1937)

Jose Gonzalez Castillo, father of the afore mentioned Catulo Castillo, becomes an orphan at an early age. He is raised by a preacher, who destines him for a clerical career. His fighting spirit makes him unsuited for this however. This characteristic is valuable for him, when he starts a career in journalism. It is also his work as a reporter, that brings him to the world of the arts, theatre to start with. He starts to write plays. Later he also produces lyrics for tango singers. He was one of the first tango poets, who shaped tango cantando. His first lyrics date from 1914. In the years that followed, he collaborated with Pascual Contursi, which resulted in *De vuelta al bulín*, *Ivette*, *Flor de fango* and *Mi noche triste*.

With *Mi noche triste* Carlos Gardel established a more important role for singers in tango orchestras, which had been predominantly limited to rather vulgar refrains or instrumental before this. In this period it was clear yet how tango could be sung, although Gardel did present us with a standard.

In 1922 he makes his solo debut as a tango poet with *Sobre el pucho* and the next year *Silbando* follows. In these lyrics Castillo combines his experiences as a writer of *sainetes* with lyrics that are fit for singing.⁸⁴ In

⁸⁴ *Sainete* are comical one act plays, with a rather vulgar character. The *sainete* originates in Spain, but with the Spanish colonisation of Latin America, they also became popular there, especially in the nineteenth century. Numerous *sainetes* were performed in Buenos Aires theatres, using actors who often were recruited from *cumparsa* (Argentine street orchestras, which are mostly active during carnival season). *Sainetes* have a satirical, parodying character and aim to portray the powers that be in *lunfardo* (Buenos Aires street language).

Famous writers of the *sainete* genre are Alberto Vacarezza, Luis Caruso and Samuel Linning (author of lyrics of *Milonguita*). It is not unusual that *sainetes* use tango music. For example, Juan de Dios Filliberto provided the music for Alberto Vacarezza's *sainete* *Botines viejos*.

Silbando he first describes the environment, before he paints a picture of what the actors do.

Father and son, Jose and Catulo, collaborated for a long period and produced *Aquella cantina de la ribera*, *El circo se va*, *El aguacero*, *Invocación al tango* and *Papel picado*.

Another example of their cooperation is when the son Catulo composed the music for *Organito de la tarde*, where his father later added the lyrics of an organ player, who meets bad faith. Jose González Castillo's lyrics are characterized by the search of hidden personal dramas, which is always accompanied by reflection. His lyrics are often in lunfardo.

10.7 Pascual Contursi (1888 – 1932)

Pacual Contursi, whose nickname Cantor del Suburbios, was also a tango poet. As far as we know, he was not a relative of Jose Maria Contursi, who wrote the well known tango *Grisel*.

In the beginning of the twentieth century left the countryside of Argentina for Buenos Aires. After his work as a cobbler (shoe maker), he sang in restaurants, accompanying himself by guitar. He started his singing career by writing lyrics to instrumental tango compositions. In this manner he provided lyrics for Samuel Castriota's tango *Lita*, which he renamed as *Mi noche triste*.

From 1915 onwards he sang in the cabaret *Moulin Rouge* in Montevideo. In his Uruguayan period Contursi already wrote some lyrics; an activity which he elaborated on his return to Buenos Aires in 1920.

It didn't take long before his lyrics were noticed by Carlos Gardel, who recorded his *La Cumparsita* (*Si supieras*) and *Mi Noche triste*. Other well known tango lyrics written by Contursi are *Bandoneon Arrabalero* (1928), *En est tarde gris* (1941), *Flor de fango* and *Nueve de Julio*.

Pacual Contursi often wrote about loneliness and one way love, thereby often using lunfardo.

10.8 Enrique Santos Discépolo (1901 – 1951)

Enrique Santos Discépolo is one of the most famous tango lyricists. He was a man of many talents. Apart from writing tango lyrics, he also played piano, led his own tango orchestra, composed tangos, acted, wrote libretto's and produced movies.

Discepolin, as he was usually called, was born in a musical family. His father Santo Discépolo arrived as an immigrant in 1872 in Buenos Aires. In Buenos Aires he formed his own theatre orchestra (accompanying sainetes), in which he played bass and piano. He also started a music school, where also pianist and composer Jose Luis Roncallo took lessons and also conducted the police and fire brigades orchestras (Banda de la Policia and Banda de los Bomberos).

Discepolin's older brother Armando also contributed some lyrics to the tango repertoire.

Discepolin started his artistic career in 1917 as an actor. Not before long, he wrote accompanied by Mario Molco the play *Los Duendes*. In 1935 Discépolo wrote the score for the movie *El alma del bandoneon*. In 1937 he played a role in the movie *Mateo*.

As a tango poet he wrote 32 tango lyrics, which were characterized by its critical character and the amount of dramatics he added to it.

His social criticisms often caused him problems in times of economical crisis and military juntas, when his tangos were blacklisted and therefore forbidden to be performed.

Social criticism in tango lyrics is remarkable. There weren't many tango poets who were critical of society.

Discepolo's most well known tango lyrics are *Esta noche me emborracho* (1927), *Yira, yira* (1930), *Cambalache* (1935), *La Tormenta* (1938 ?), *Cancion Desperada* (1944) and *El Choclo* (1947).^{85 86} The list of singers who sang his lyrics is almost endless: Sofia Bozan, Carlos Gardel, Tita Merello, Rosita Quiroga, Oscar Serpa, Roberto Rufino, Mario Bustos, Tito Schipa, Edmundo Rivero and Raul Beron.^{87 88}

⁸⁵ The music of *El Choclo* was already composed in 1900 by Angel Viloldo. Discépolo added the lyrics in 1947.

⁸⁶ Discepolo's first lyrics were published in 1925 under a pseudonym Jose Antonio Saldas.

⁸⁷ In 1935 Sofia Bozan was the first singer to sing *Cambalache*.

10.9 Homero Expósito (1918 – 1987)

Exposito has occupied himself with poetry since a young age. He studied literature in Buenos Aires and with a firm basis in literature and philosophy (but without a degree) he started to write tango lyrics in 1938. He was introduced into Miguel Calo's orchestra by Héctor Stamponi. Calo's orchestra was also known as the orchestra of the stars, since it featured many extremely talented musicians and singers, such as Enrique Mario Francini, Armando Pontier, Domingo Federico, Osmar Maderna, Raul Beron and Alberto Podesta.

In this creative atmosphere Exposito's talents were not wasted, since he wrote many lyrics for Calo, such as Naranjo en flor, Percal, Yuyo verde, Tristezas de la calle Corrientes, Al compás del corazón and the waltz Flor de lino (for Troilo).

In his lyrics Exposito often used metaphors and free verses.⁸⁹ His style is a compromise between Homero Manzi's romanticism and Discepolo's sarcastic dramatics, but is nonetheless his own style.

During most of his tango career Homero Exposito had an intense cooperation with his 6 years younger brother Vergilio Hugo, a well respected pianist. Farol and Naranjo en Flor are joint productions.

10.10 Horacio Ferrer (1933 - ?)

Horacio Ferrer is the founder of Academia Nacional del Tango, an organization that guards tango as a cultural world heritage. He started his career however as a poet, singer and musician. From an early age he published poems. His first collection of poems was released in the fifties, which make him, by comparison, one of the modern tango poets. After la epoca de oro, the golden age of tango, Ferrer started to document and systematical investigate tango.

⁸⁸ Tito Schipa was a famous Italian opera singer, who during the twenties and thirties often sang in Teatro Colon. In the period from 1928 – 1931 he recorded a few tango with (presumably) Elvino Vardaro orchestra (or maybe Orquesta Típica Victor).

⁸⁹ A metaphor is an application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

He held lectures on tango, wrote books on tango, founded the Academia Nacional del Tango in 1999 and is also one of the driving forces behind todotango.com.

As a poet he became also popular when he collaborated with Astor Piazzolla. This collaboration resulted in *Balada para un loco*, *Che tango che*, *El gordo triste*, *Preludio para el año 3001*, *Balada para mi muerte*, and *Chiquilin de Bachin*.

He also wrote librettos for the tango opera *Maria de Buenos Aires*, with a musical score by Piazzolla.

This operetta *Maria de Buenos Aires* was first performed in 1968 Sala Planeta in Buenos Aires. All and all Ferrer and Piazzolla were a team for twenty years.

Ferrer also worked together with other illustrious names in tango history, such as Roberto Grela, Leopoldo Federico, Raúl Garello, Horacio Salgán, Julio De Caro, Pedro Laurenz, Armando Pontier, Osvaldo Pugliese and Aníbal Troilo.

One of his ambitions was to innovate tango with non confirmative lyrics. He was not afraid to defend the avant-garde tango in a period most argentinians were still abhorred by it.

In the late fifties Ferrer studied bandoneon and was part of a tango orchestra. In this period he also contributed for seven years to the tango magazine *Tangueando*. In the sixties and seventies Ferrer appeared on television in programs which dealt with the history and evolution of tango.

In 1970 he publishes his opus magnum *El Libro del Tango, Arte Popular de Buenos Aires*. Although at times his career as a tango poet was overshadowed by other activities, Ferrer did contribute significantly to the lyrical tango repertoire.

10.11 Celedonio Esteban Flores (1896 – 1947)

Flores started as a songwriter, who from 1919 onwards shifted more and more his focus to tango lyrics. He was a talented poet, whose debut poem *Por la pinta* was recorded by Carlos Gardel.

Flores was an interesting personality: a bohemian, well educated and erudite, but also a boxer. He became known by the general public as a poet in the twenties, but his most creative and successful period were the thirties.

In 1929 he published *Chapeleando Barro*, a collection of poems, which was dedicated to Buenos Aires. His lyrics were especially used by Rosita Quiroga and Carlos Gardel. For some years he wrote exclusively for Rosita Quiroga. Gardel recorded 21 lyrics of Flores, of which *Mano a mano* is best remembered.

Other well known lyrics by Flores are *Attenti pebeta*, *Corrientes y Esmeralda*, *Mano a mano*, *La Mariposa* and *La Punalada*. His lyrics are characterized by the accurate descriptions of the characters in it. During the writing process he identified with their characters and put into words his own experiences in life. In his lyrics he often used lunfardo. From time to time Flores did voice social criticism of society. In his poem *Pan* he severely criticizes the economic depression of the thirties.

Flores's last years are bitter. The military junta censored tango lyrics. The censor focused on lunfardo and social criticism of the regime was not allowed, which caused his poems to lose much of its strength.

10.12 Alfredo Le Pera (1900 – 1935)

Alfredo Le Pera was apart from tango poet also a reporter and he also wrote plays and film scripts. After school he started to study medicine, but his interest soon shifted to journalism.

In 1928 his employer (*El Mundo*) sent him to the USA, where he was fascinated by the young film industry. When he returned to Argentina he started to work for *United Artists*. In this period he wrote his first tango *Carillón de La Merced*, which was premiered by Tania.

In the thirties he settled in Paris, where he met Gardel in 1932. Soon after their meeting Le Pera started to write for Gardel, which results in some unforgettable lyrics, such as *El día que me quieras*, *Cuesto abajo*, *Volver* and *Mi Buenos Aires Querido*. Their cooperation ends tragically in 1935 when Le Pera and Gardel die in an airplane crash in Medellín (Colombia).

10.12 Homero Manzi (1907 – 19151)

Homero Manzi was a multi talented man. Apart from writing tango lyrics, he also was teacher, journalist and writer of librettos and actor in movies. In later years he was also active in labor unions and politics.

Manzi became also known by his cooperation Sebastian Piana. They managed to resurrect the milonga genre, which at that time was fading into oblivion. The poet Manzi and the pianist Piana wrote Milonga Sentimental, Milonga Triste and Milonga del 900. Other well known lyrics from Manzi are Barrio de Tango, Discepolin, Malena and Romance de Barrio.

Manzi never used lunfardo in his lyrics and his themes are longing and nostalgia. His description of people are warm, sympathetic and respectful.

10.13 Luis Rubistein (1908 – 1954)

Luis Rubistein's roots lay in Russia's Ukraine. Due to anti-Semitic sentiments Rubistein's parents immigrated to Buenos Aires in 1906. By entering Buenos Aires the customs officers misspelled his name as Rubistein (instead of Rubinstein).

Rubistein was an intelligent and successful man, although in his youth it seemed different. At an early age he was expelled from school, because he threw an inkpot at his teacher, who reprimanded him for writing poems during the lessons.

He never stopped writing poems and also became active as a journalist. In 1933 he founded a school for popular arts; the Primera Academia Argentina de Interpretación (PAADI). This enterprise soon became successful. Instrumental to the success of this enterprise were

In 1940 Rubistein had a great hit with Charlemos, a song which within a year was on the repertoire of five prominent tango orchestras. Other well know lyrics by Rubistein are Nada más, Cautivo, Grisel, Inspiracion, Tarde Gris, Cuatro palabras and Plomo.

11 The evolution of tango dance

11.1 Introduction

When you observe tango dancers during milongas, it inescapably strikes you that every dancer has his or her own dance style. Every dance is unique, which can be caused by the mood, the partner you are dancing with, the music and a lot of other factors.

Tango is a ‘living’ dance, which is hardly regulated at all. In the world ballroom dancing there are worldwide operating organizations, which look after the standardization of ballroom dancing. Tango argentino is hardly standardized at all.⁹⁰ Books like Victor Sylvester’s *Modern Ballroom Dancing* and Vernon & Irene Castle’s *Modern Dancing*, which describe in great detail the steps and choreographies of the various ballroom dance forms, do exist in the world of tango argentino (often written by non Argentineans), but lack the authority these books have in the world of ballroom dancing.⁹¹

The reason is of course that tango argentino is an improvisational dance. Sure, there are steps and choreographies, but during a milonga choreographies often can’t be finished, because of other dancing couples. Halfway through a choreography, a dancing couple is often forced to improvise. This improvisational part of tango dancing is what many dancers experience as the essence and charm of tango.

If you study the few film fragments of tango dancing in/and before the forties and fifties, you will notice that people were dancing differently than we do today.⁹² All and all it is correct to say that in the history of tango dance a lot of things did change and still do change. And what is more, it is impossible to predict how tango will be danced in the next decades. One thing is sure though, in some ways it will be different than the way we dance today.

⁹⁰ The concept tango argentino will be used for tango to separate it from ballroom tango, which we consider as a dance form that is a ‘distant relative’ of tango argentino.

⁹¹ Sylvester’s *Modern Ballroom Dancing* sold over half a million copies worldwide. A printing like this is unthinkable for tango argentino.

⁹² On Youtube (www.youtube.com) various dance fragments are available, although it might take you some time to find them.

This chapter deals with the evolution of tango dance. When you look for documentation on how tango dance evolved, you encounter a problem. There have been written libraries full of books on the history of tango, but hardly anything on how tango dance evolved. With the exception of a few books, some articles on internet and some isolated remarks in other books, we do not know much on how dancing started and evolved to what we nowadays view as tango dancing. In this chapter we will try to reconstruct carefully what happened in tango dancing. It goes without saying that this chapter has a speculative and hypothesis forming character. So be it!

11.2 Evolution of tango dance

Because of the lack of data on the evolution of tango dance, we chose for a thematic exploratory method instead of a chronological descriptive method. The question that we attempt to answer is twofold:

- what factors did influence the evolution of tango dance?
- what were their implications for the evolution of tango dance?

In our opinion the following factors have played a role in the evolution of tango dance:

- music
- dance floor
- dancers
- political situation
- economical situation
- media
- other dances
- method of learning to dance
- image of tango
- dress and etiquette

11.2.1 Music

It will not come as a great surprise that tango music played and plays an important role in tango dance. Tango music structures and inspires the dance. Without music, no dance. In Latin America music and dance are

indissolubly interwoven with one another. The interaction of music and dance is omnipresent. The dance influences the music, but dancers also influence the musicians and therefore the music. Music is dance and dance is music. This is different from the situation in Northern America and Europe. Two thousand years of Christianity left their traces in the European dance culture.

If we focus on the role tango music played in the evolution of tango dance, we first have to present a brief history of tango music. In the twenties and thirties tango music was rather straightforward and simple in structure, whereas in the forties and fifties the tango music became much more complicated, which had a lot to do with the transformation of the line up in tango orchestras. In the twenties and thirties the normal line up was that of an *orquesta típica*, which usually consisted of two bandoneons, two violins, a double bass and a piano.

When at the end of the thirties tango dancing (again) became more and more popular, an *orquesta típica* wasn't able anymore to produce the sound volume, which was needed. In those days there didn't exist PA systems, so music had to be acoustically amplified.⁹³ And since five bandoneons definitively produce more volume than two, the *orquesta típica* was doomed to disappear. Just like in jazz bands in the USA, tango orchestras became bigger. The American big bands consisted of various sections: a rhythm section, a violin section, a brass section, a wood section, etc. Tango orchestras underwent a similar change.⁹⁴ In *gran orquestas* there was a bandoneon section and a violin section, etc. The birth of *gran orquestas* was also made possible by the economic situation of Argentina in the forties; Argentina profited big from the second world war. The *gran orquestas* were able to produce enough sound. But the coming into existence of *gran orquestas* also had another effect; it allowed the orchestra more musical possibilities, which meant that compositions became more complicated, which also caused the tango dance to become more complicated.

⁹³ A PA system is 'an electronic amplification system with a mixer, amplifier and loudspeakers, used to reinforce a given sound (e.g., a person making a speech, pre-recorded music, or message) and distributing the 'sound' to the general public around a building' (Wikipedia UK).

⁹⁴ The *gran orquestas* of the forties and fifties can be seen as the big bands of Argentine tango.

It is not only tango music which plays a role in the evolution of the dance. Tango is fused out of a variety of musical genres, which were popular around 1880 – 1890. The building blocks of tango are generally considered to be the Cuban habanera, the Argentine milonga, the Brazilian maxixe and the African candombe, the Polish mazurka and polka, the Spanish fado and flamenco and various other cultural influences.⁹⁵⁹⁶ So the building block came from Africa, Europe and Latin America, but the construction was definitely Argentinean.

It is very hard, if not impossible, to pinpoint the influences these sources had on tango music and tango dance. If you venture to speculate on this influence, you can say that the maxixe had the same ‘dirty dancing’ character early tango dance possessed and that the African candombe contributed to the energizing and speeding up of the dance at the turn of the twentieth century.

The candombe was brought to Argentina by African slaves. Until far into the nineteenth century a substantial part of the population of Buenos Aires was of African descent.⁹⁷ As a consequence of the 1871 yellow fever epidemic, interracial marriages and the enormous wave of immigrants, Buenos Aires lost its black character.⁹⁸ Candombe is still popular in Montevideo (Uruguay). In Argentina the candombe evolved into canyengue (which was the dance style to well into the thirties), which is primarily a tango con cortes y quebradas.⁹⁹

The relationship between music and dance changes in the twenties and thirties. In 1917 Carlos Gardel sang *Mi Noche Triste*, which resulted in a

⁹⁵The maxixe (pronounce masheesh) is a forerunner of the samba and is often referred to as the Brazilian tango. The maxixe has a more vulgar character than samba

⁹⁶ Tango as a musical genre is born out of a variety of other musical genres, which came to Argentina during the second half of the nineteenth century. Many of the influences are now untraceable, but did (perhaps in a minimal way) contribute to the birth and evolution of tango music.

⁹⁷ In the middle of the nineteenth century approximately one third of all Buenos Aires inhabitants was black. Half a century later this percentage was decimated.

⁹⁸ The yellow fever epidemic of 1871 also caused a lot of well to do Argentines to flee from Buenos Aires and build a new house in a region outside BA, which was considered to be more healthy. Their old houses were rented to families of immigrants and thus became *conventillos* (tenant blocks).

⁹⁹ Cortes y quebradas refer to two dance figures which were very popular in the early days of tango, but which also were seen as rather vulgar by the upper class.

new tango genre; tango canción. Tango canción drew a public which preferred listening to the lyrics above dancing to the music. The popularity of tango as dance music waned in the twenties and early thirties and subsequently the popularity of dancing decreased. This development was encouraged by the music of Julio De Caro, which can be considered as a musical genius. His music may have been too complex for its time. We don't expect tango dance changed significantly in this period.

In 1935 this all changed when Rodolfo Biagi one evening during the first set started to improvise with the other members of the D'Arienzo orchestra. The place was empty, apart from some waiters and D'Arienzo hadn't arrived yet. The waiters were very pleased with what they heard. When they asked later that night if D'Arienzo could play like the first set, the musicians were a little bit embarrassed, for D'Arienzo was a strict leader, who didn't allow his musicians much musical freedom. When, finally, they did play like the first set, the now present visitors and dancers were very enthusiastic and danced a lot. There and then D'Arienzo decided to change the style of the orchestra.¹⁰⁰ The new style of D'Arienzo is rhythmical, energetic, faster than it used to be and playful (especially Biagi's piano playing). In the beginning not everyone was happy with this new style, but later on most orchestra's did follow his example and started to play faster and more energetically.

What were the consequences of these musical innovations for the tango dance?

First of all, dancing became popular again. Milongas were flooded with dancers and the dancing experienced a golden age, which lasted till the end of the fifties. The second consequence was that, also due to the *gran orquestas*, music got more complex. The complexity of the music and the better condition of the dance floors in the forties, caused the dance to become more complicated and elegant. The forties resulted in a lot of dance innovations, like *gancho*, *barrida* and *media luna*. The most popular dance style of the forties was *tango de salon*, which replaced the *canyengue* and *milonguero* style of the thirties.

Also after the dark ages of tango (sixties and seventies), when a tango renaissance started in Europe and North America, *tango salon* remained

¹⁰⁰ Denniston (2007: 68-69).

the most popular dance style.¹⁰¹ In the eighties, mainly as a consequence of the show *Tango Argentino*, tango fantasia or tango espectáculo became popular and with it acrobatics, ballet and show dance elements entered tango dance.

The last few years tango music received a strong impulse from neo tango, which can be defined as a genre which tries to fuse modern digital recording and sampling techniques with traditional tango themes. Neo tango is also inspired by modern music genres like dance, hip hop, trance, etc.¹⁰² It is to be expected that dance elements from the before mentioned dance genres will enter the world of tango dance (if this not already has happened). Whether these influence on tango dance is a permanent influence, remains to be seen. The next few years will reveal what direction tango dance's evolution will go.

11.2.2 The dance floor

About the origins of tango hangs a mist. We don't know much about it. If you venture to speculate about it, you can say that it is very likely that tango originated accidentally around 1880 -1890 on the streets or the courtyards of the conventillos of Buenos Aires. The streets were probably sand roads at that time. Dancing on a sandy or muddy street, with a wobbly surface is very different from the situation nowadays. The possibilities are more limited. An ocho which uses a turn on the ball of the foot is not possible. It would be very uncomfortable for the woman. In the period tango was danced on the streets, the ocho was danced in another way: the free leg was taken back before the fixed leg, without turning.

¹⁰¹ The period from approximately 1955 (the end of *la época de oro*) till the 1983 (the end of the military junta) is the era that tango went underground. This period is also called the dark ages of tango.

¹⁰² In 2000 completely unexpected a new sound entered the world of tango music, when The Gotan Project released their CD *La revancha del tango*. This very successful debut had a profound impact on tango music. There was a flooding of new bands, who were inspired by this new sound. Examples are: *Bajofondo Tangoclub*, *Otros Aires en Narcotango*. The new sound is labelled *neotango*, although there are also other labels attached to this new sound, such as *electronic tango*, *tangofusion*, *alternative tango*, etc.

The cotres and quebradas are probably the oldest steps in tango. The originated in this period (end of nineteenth century), when tango was not yet called tango, but el baile con cortes y quebradas.

In the first years of the twentieth century tango did gain some social acceptance and the result was that tango dancing moved towards cafetins. In the cafetins (small cafes) the floor was usually a little more comfortable than on the streets. It is possibly that there were tile floors or wooden floors (with sawdust on it).

The worldwide tango mania which spread from Paris in 1912, will definitely have contributed to the popularity and civilisation of tango. We expect that the cortes and quebradas were banned from tango in this period and replaced by other figures and steps.¹⁰³

In the late thirties and forties Argentina became one of the richest countries in the world. By remaining neutral, la republica Argentina profited in a big way from the second world war. One of the consequences of the enormous wealth of Argentina was the building of big and luxurious dancehalls with high quality dance floors. The turning on the ball of the foot became possible, which facilitated a new range of dance figures.

11.2.3 The dancers

One of the most important factors in the evolution of the tango dance are the dancers off course. The non regulative aspect of tango dance also contributed to the evolution of tango dance. Certainly in the begin period of tango a leader had to be a real good dancer, because woman wouldn't want to dance with him otherwise. It seems likely that there were dancers who invented new 'tricks', just to distinguish them from the other dancers and to improve their changes in dancing with women. Most of the well-known dancers of tango's dance history, like Casimiro Ain (1882–1940), Juan Carlos Copes (1931) & Maria Nieves (1938), El Cachafaz (1885–1942), Petroleo (1912–?) , Virulazo (1926–1990), Antonio Todaro (?) and Pepito Avelaneda (1930–1996) and hundreds of nameless other tangueros, contributed to the development of tango dance or at least helped to refine and perfect tango dance.

¹⁰³ The coming of tango argentino to Europe and North America had a civilising effect on tango but also caused a split in tango; ballroom tango was born.

El Cachafaz (whose real name was Ovidio Jose Bianquet) was known to invent a lot of new steps and Petroleo (whose real name was Carlos Alberto Estevez) invented *contrafrente* (a change of posture) and *boleos*.

11.2.4 The political situation

Libraries full have been written on the political history of Argentina, which is characterised by sudden and sometimes absurd political developments. Especially during the government of Juan Peron (1946-1955) and during the junta years (1976-1983) politics was an important factor in the evolution of tango dance.

During the regime of the nationalistic Peron regime tango was ‘sponsored’ by the state. After the fall of his government in 1955 tango was associated with the regime which had been replaced and involvement with tango was seen by many people as political suspect. The result was that tango lost much of its popularity and went underground. Therefore the Peronistic regime had an ambivalent effect on the evolution of tango dance. During its reign, the Peron regime stimulated tango as Argentina’s dominant cultural property. It is likely that dance gained by this. After the Peron regime tango was politically defined as untrustworthy. We expect that tango dance in the sixties and seventies hardly evolved at all.

During the junta politics influenced the evolution of tango dance in an indirect and contra productive way. The junta’s war on subversion was fought following a philosophy that all means were allowed to realise the goal. Thousands were kidnapped, tortured and killed. So called ‘political opponents’ were doped and thrown out of an airplane above sea. The mothers of just born babies were killed and the babies were sold to the highest bidder, often members of the junta. Journalists were kidnapped and intimidated (in the best case) or murdered (in the worst case). The consequence of the dirty war was that many potentially subversives (artists and political dissidents) left Argentina and settled in Paris.¹⁰⁴ In Paris a new Argentine subculture was born. Musicians met and formed tango orchestras.

¹⁰⁴ Examples of the dirty war practices can be found in Andrew Graham-Yooll’s *A state of fear. Memories of Argentina’s nightmare* (1986) and Horacio Verbitsky’s *Confessions of an Argentine dirty warrior* (1996).

In Paris, a cultural melting pot for diverse Argentinean musical and cultural influences, plans were born to produce a musical about tango with dance sequences in it. After a long period of preparations, delays and setbacks the show *Tango Argentino* was premiered at the 1983 Festival d'Automne in Paris.¹⁰⁵ The show was a success. In 1984 the show *Tango Argentino* returned to Paris, where it had its final international breakthrough. After Paris the Biennial de Venecia (Italy), in 1985 City Centre (New York, USA) and finally Broadway followed. In the next two years the show toured through the United States. In 1987 *Tango Argentino* returned to Europe and after performances in Paris there followed dozens of other performances in Germany, Holland, Switzerland and Italy.

In 1989 the show fell victim to its own success. Sexteto Mayor switched for a better pay to another show (*Tango Passion*), which was led by Hector Zaraspe. Also an internal financial fraud, the death of Hector Orezzaoli and the jealousy of the dance couples (after being nominated for a Tony for the dance choreography), were enough reason for Claudio Segovia to stop the show *Tango Argentino*.

Many of the participating couples have since that time been travelling through Europe and North America to teach tangueros. They often specialize in great and spectacularly looking choreographies, which are hardly useable for average dancers during milongas, but which do function none the less as an inspiration for many dancers.

Many of these couples (and other young dance teachers) are professionally schooled on dance and/or ballet conservatories. The last few decades have seen a growing influence of modern dance, ballet and acrobatics on tango dancing. *Tango fantasia* or *tango espectáculo* do flourish beside *tango de salon*. In nearly all big cities of Europe and North America dancers discovered tango, started dance schools, milongas and since mid nineties also a growing number of tango festivals are organised.

¹⁰⁵ Claudio Segovia and Hector Orezzaoli started their plans for a musical already in 1973 (Lentijo, 1998-2000).

11.2.5 The economical situation

The economical situation/development in the twentieth century has known its ups and downs. At the end of the thirties and the forties the Buenos Aires middle class flourished. Argentina profited from the second world war. Especially the export of food (meat and cereals) to England contributed enormously to the wealth of Argentina. The middle class had by that time accepted tango as their dance, but not without civilising tango. The middle class didn't want to be associated with the lower class where tango had originated. As a consequence canyengue popularity decreased and was 'replaced' by tango de salon, which is still one of the most dominant dance forms in tango.

11.2.6 The new media

The rising popularity of tango, which includes dance, music and lyrics, was stimulated by the rise of the new media in the late twenties and early thirties. Both the talking movie (the talkies) and radio were essential to the enormous popularity tango gained in the forties. Many of the most famous tango musicians and tango singers started their career performing for the radio or the movies.¹⁰⁶ Countless tango movies were released in these years, such as *Luces de Buenos Aires* (1931) and *El día que me quieras*.¹⁰⁷ Tango movies like the very successful *Luces de Buenos Aires* did show, however, a somewhat misleading concept of how tango was danced. This result was a self-fulfilling prophecy; the rather caricatural dance fragments were accepted by many dancers as authentic. Dancers were inspired to dance this way, in the assumption this was *comme il faut*. Many movie producers recognized the popularity of tango and added some tango scenes to their movie. It seemed that the success of a movie was determined by the number of tango scenes it contained. In

¹⁰⁶ Many musicians and singers preferred radio to making records, because radio paid better wages. This is one of the reasons that some excellent musicians and singers left only a few recordings or no recordings at all.

¹⁰⁷ The movie *El día que me quieras* was produced in 1935 by John Reinhardt to a script by Alfredo Le Pera and which starred Carlos Gardel (with a little by role for a very young Astor Piazzolla. *Las Luces de Buenos Aires* was shot in 1931 by director Adelqui Migliar to a script by Luis Bayón Herrera and Manuel Romero. In this movie Carlos Gardel and Sofia Bozan appeared. In this movie Julio De Caro functioned as musical director.

more recent times there also were released several tango movies, like Carlos Saura's (Tango) and Sally Potter's The Tango Lesson. Tango's media exposure was however definitely less than in the thirties and forties. In general it is fair to say that the majority of tango movies and documentaries show a more or less caricatured and romanticized picture of tango dance. The show elements of tango dance are more dominant than in real life tango dance.

11.2.7 The other dances

Tango as dance and a music genre have always been in contact with other cultures. This may well be the most essential characteristic of tango: the interaction with other cultures, the acceptance, innovation and adoption of other forms of culture into the tango culture.

In the course of tango history Cuban habanera, African candombe, Argentine milonga, but also the European dances, such as mazurka, polka, fado, flamenco, did influence and shape tango dance. It is very likely that steps and figures from these dance (and probably some others) were incorporated in tango, if only in an adapted form. And if you look at Kelly and Facundo, you will also see that jazz and swing have left some traces in tango dance.

During its history, tango dance has always been interacting with other dances. This interaction, which is characteristic for a living dance, may have been less dominant in the sixties and seventies, when tango was almost forgotten.

Lately the neo tango wave introduces new concepts in tango dance.

11.2.8 Learning to dance

The way in which tango is taught and handed over from one dancer to another or from one generation of dancers to the next has changed over time. The last few decades countless tango teachers have been travelling around the world to teach. There have appeared DVD's with tango dance instruction, books, etc. In the beginning of the twentieth century nothing of the kind existed.

At the turn of the century tango dance was evolving, being born. The way people learned to dance was probably more an evolutionary process

than a learning process. More inventing tango together, than learning it from a teacher.

Buenos Aires at that time was already a big city, but was also a conglomeration of neighbourhoods (*barrios*), which were more or less independent of each other and had something of a village like character. Of course there was interaction between the *barrios*, but not so much that in different *barrios* different accent existed in tango dancing and also musically. If dancers and musicians (in more or less accidental line ups) travelled to other *barrios*, they often met with innovations in dance and music or vice versa; they brought new things to other *barrios*. When they returned they may have taught these novelties to other dancers and musicians. Some of these novelties may have stuck, other may have been forgotten or served as inspiration for other new steps. And so tango evolved, more or less accidentally.

In the forties learning to dance became more or less institutionalized, where by for men and women there were separated learning trajectories. Men usually learned to dance in *practicas*, where older men learned them first to follow and later to lead.¹⁰⁸ During the following phase, walking and posture were the main themes. When this went well, they were taught to lead. After two or three years of doing *practicas* three to five times a week, they were taken to a *milonga* by their mentor, who would arrange a woman for him to dance with. If this didn't go well, it was back to the *practica*. For women there weren't *practica*. They were usually taught by their mothers, brothers, older sisters or girl friends.¹⁰⁹

When in the eighties, after the dark age of tango, dancing tango is re-born, the first forms of teaching a tango class appear. Usually this is because tango tourists asked for it. Those who have experience workshop by the old *maestros*, will know that they hardly taught at all. They presented a complex figure, repeated it a few times, and asked you to try it for yourself. Then they watched, smoked a cigarette, drank a cup of coffee, and when after half an hour they realised this didn't work, they would help you. This is hardly surprising, because this generation of dancers had only experience with *practica*. The younger generation of

¹⁰⁸ A *practica* is a place where men practiced tango dance and also experienced tango dancers instructed men who wanted to learn to dance tango (see Denniston 2007:202). The plural of *practica* is also *practica*.

¹⁰⁹ If you want to know more about how tango was taught in *la epoca de oro*, we refer to Denniston (2007).

maestros usually pays more attention to teaching tango. In a lot of cases they had a professional schooling in dance (ballet, modern dance, jazz dance, etc.).

11.2.9 Image of tango

Tango has always been a point of controversy in the society where it was born. In the first decades of the twentieth century tango was viewed as something filthy and indecent, something a responsible and decent citizen didn't do. Not for nothing they referred to tango as the reptile of the brothels.¹¹⁰ During the twenties and thirties tango became more or less accepted by the general public.

In the forties and fifties, during the Peron regime, tango was 'state sponsored': radio was required to dedicate a substantial amount of time to Argentine music. Due to this political involvement with tango, tango lost much of its popularity after the dramatic economical and political end of the Peron regime.

In the sixties and seventies tango lived underground. Tango was still danced in out of the way, backstreet halls, where dancers knew and trusted each other and where newcomers were viewed with suspicion. People who danced tango were viewed with suspicion by others, because it seemed to be politically incorrect. It is not very likely that tango changed much in this atmosphere.

In the sixties and seventies tango music also changed dramatically. The golden age of tango was over. Astor Piazzolla changed tango completely by introducing jazz and classic influences into tango and thereby created a sharp contrast between conservatives and moderns. We get the impression that Piazzolla's break with traditional tango music, also created or caused a split between the older and the younger generation. Parents who loved Canaro, Troilo, De Angelis and D'Arienzo saw themselves opposed by their children who adored Piazzolla. Talking about a generation gap.

Nowadays there is something of debate about neo tango. Is this still tango (danceable), and if so; what is the future of tango (dance)?

¹¹⁰ The most famous quotations about tango clearly show what decent, upper class citizens thought of tango: "Is one supposed to do this standing up" and "Tango is a vertical expression of a horizontal desire."

11.2.10 Dress and etiquette

It may sound strange but also the way people dress once did play an important role in the evolution of tango dance. Dependent on fashion, the way people dress can dictate the way they dance.

The ladies fashion in the thirties (small and tight dresses) limited their freedom to move. Gancho weren't possible, without damage to their dresses. Canyengue style of dancing was logical, because of this. Also social etiquette played a role in this, in the thirties it was considered not done for women to show their ankles and sole of the feet. The gancho came in to being in the forties, during la epoca de oro.

Dance shoes, that is shoes especially designed for dancing, is typical for parts of the northern hemisphere. In some Argentina dancers only wear dance shoes for the last few decades. Most dancers dance on their normal everyday shoes. We expect that due to the stream of tango tourists the Argentine dancers may have followed this habit. Certainly the Argentine tango dance pros wear dance shoes. Nowadays you can have your own dance shoes designed in Buenos Aires for sympathetic prices.

Part 3

Miscellaneous

12 Sound engineering for DJ's

By Michiel Lombaers

12.1 Introduction

DJ-ing means you also have to be able to operate some technical equipment and try to get music to sound as good as possible. This chapter will give you a fundamental insight in the musical configurations you can come across while DJ-ing.

12.2 What and why?

There are a couple of essential tricks that a DJ should know when working on a PA-system without the aid of a seasoned sound engineer.¹¹¹ There are also a couple of small and cheap tools that can save the evening.

Again, it's about saving the evening (or at least a part of it). Consider the situation where you're the DJ on a milonga on a location with a rented PA system. When there is also an orchestra involved there is a big chance that the mixing-console will have 10 times too many channels with 5 times too many functions. That's 50 times too many knobs and switches to confuse you.

The sound engineer that is responsible for the PA is off-side, (apply your own favorite horror scenario here) the promoter would like to hear some music and the first milongueros are eager to hit the floor.

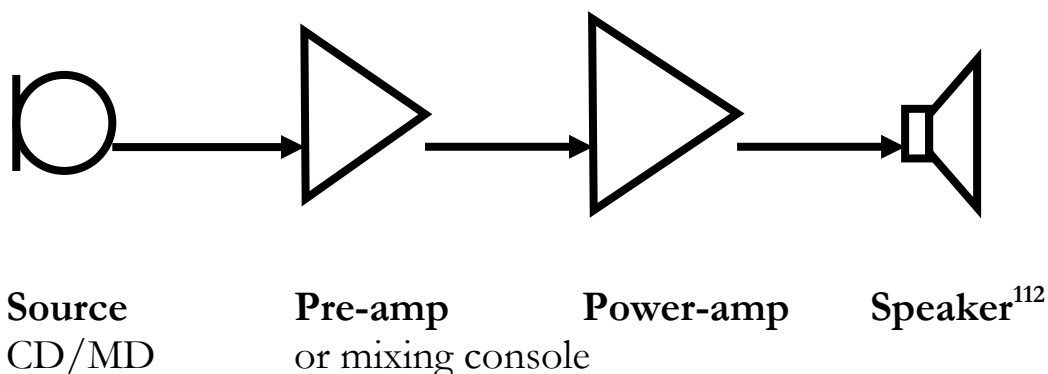
There is a specific sequence of working that'll give the best chance of trouble free sound. But rule number 1 is most important:

- don't let anybody rush you,
- work methodical,
- and check (or even double check) every step.

Because this tutorial will introduce a couple of terms and expressions that might be new to you, a couple of those will be explained here.

¹¹¹ A **public address** or "**PA**" system is an electronic amplification system with a mixer, amplifier and loudspeakers, used to reinforce a given sound (e.g., a person making a speech, prerecorded music, or message) and distributing the 'sound' to the general public around a building (source: Wikipedia UK).

The audio chain



There is a common system of building blocks in (almost) every audio chain. Those include:

- **A source:** this can be a CD, a mini-disk player, a tape-deck, a laptop or a microphone.
- **A pre-amp:** this can be a part of your domestic Hi-Fi, a dedicated one, or a mixing console (which is in fact a whole load of pre-amps bundled together). Here you sort the different sources, apply EQ (equalizer, tone control) when needed, and adjust the volume of the final output.
- **A power amp:** this is the unit that boosts the signal up to the level that is required to drive the speakers.¹¹³

¹¹² A **loudspeaker, speaker, or speaker system** is an electromechanical transducer that converts an electrical signal to sound. The term *loudspeaker* can refer to individual devices (otherwise known as *drivers*), or to complete systems consisting of a enclosure incorporating one or more drivers and additional electronic components. Loudspeakers are the most variable elements in any audio system, and are responsible for marked audible differences between sound systems. Loudspeaker performance (i.e., their accuracy in reproducing a signal without adding distortion) is significantly worse than that of other audio equipment (source: Wikipedia UK).

¹¹³ Generally, an **amplifier** is any device that will convert one signal (often with a very small amount of energy, a few milliwatt) into a another signal (often with a larger amount of energy e.g. several hundred watts).

In popular use, the term today usually refers to an electronic amplifier, often as in audio applications. The relationship of the input to the output of an amplifier — usually expressed as a function of the input frequency — is called the transfer function of the amplifier, and the magnitude of the transfer function is termed the gain. A related device that emphasizes conversion of signals of one type to another (for example, a light signal in photons to a DC signal in amperes) is a transducer, or a sensor. However, a transducer does not amplify power.

- **Speakers:** these transform the sound from an electrical signal to an acoustic (audible) one.¹¹⁴
- **Cabling:** apart from your precious ghetto-blaster every audio system has an amount of cables to connect the various pieces with each other. Most of the cables and connectors of a professional sound-system are designed for their specific function.

Most important for us is the central control unit in the sound system.

12.3 The mixing console¹¹⁵

In basic principle the big sound system with mixing console (a.k.a. PA or Public Address system) is not so very different from your home stereo. You can select a (sound) signal, adjust and amplify it until it has enough power to drive the speakers to the desired volume. The biggest differences are in the feature of summing up signals and the possibility to control and adjust almost every stage of the sound amplification.

¹¹⁴ A **loudspeaker, speaker, or speaker system** is an electromechanical transducer that converts an electrical signal to sound. The term *loudspeaker* can refer to individual devices (otherwise known as *drivers*), or to complete systems consisting of a enclosure incorporating one or more drivers and additional electronic components. Loudspeakers are the most variable elements in any audio system, and are responsible for marked audible differences between sound systems. Loudspeaker performance (i.e., their accuracy in reproducing a signal without adding distortion) is significantly worse than that of other audio equipment (source: Wikipedia UK).

¹¹⁵ In professional audio, a **mixing console, digital mixing console, mixing desk** (Brit.), or **audio mixer**, also called a **sound board** or **soundboard**, is an electronic device for combining (also called "mixing"), routing, and changing the level, timbre and/or dynamics of audio signals. A mixer can mix analog or digital signals, depending on the type of mixer. The modified signals (voltages or digital samples) are summed to produce the combined output signals.

Mixing consoles are used in many applications, including recording studios, public address systems, sound reinforcement systems, broadcasting, television, and film post-production. An example of a simple application would be to enable the signals that originated from two separate microphones (each being used by vocalists singing a duet, perhaps) to be heard through one set of speakers simultaneously. When used for live performances, the signal produced by the mixer will usually be sent directly to an amplifier, unless that particular mixer is "powered" or it is being connected to powered speakers (source: Wikipedia UK).

(Photo mixing console)

A simple mixing console (as shown above) is divided in channels where the individual sounds are adapted and then fine-tuned, and a master section where they are mixed together, with a possibility for sub-mix channels in between. (Hopefully, we won't need to know about sub-mixing.)

This will give at least three stages to adjust the volume:

- At first comes '**gain**', situated as the first thing after the input, on top of the channel. Here you can optimize the level, as it comes out of your player.¹¹⁶
- Secondly there is the **channel fader**, situated on the bottom of the channel. When you need to adjust the levels between songs, it's the best to use this fader.
- And finally there is the '**master fader**'. The point where all the active channels are combined and sent to the mixer output connections. The fader(s) at this point regulate the overall output volume and is normally left at a preset value.

Then there are a couple of parts in-between that can be used to fine tune the sound or separate it to different outputs:

- **EQ:** The most important part for us. This section can be build up in various ways but it will at least have a low and a high filter. Beside that it can have:
 - A low cut switch. This is a filter that is designed to filter out 'rumble' low frequency noise like the handling noise of a microphone or the resonations of a 78 rpm record played back with a Hi-Fi pick-up.
 - One or more mid-band controls, very useful on old records. Sometimes with frequency and (more rare) band-width control, very useful to confuse the novice operator.

¹¹⁶ In electronics, **gain** is a measure of the ability of a circuit (often an amplifier) to increase the power or amplitude of a signal. It is usually defined as the mean ratio of the signal output of a system to the signal input of the same system. It may also be defined as the decimal logarithm of the same ratio (source: Wikipedia UK).

- A bypass switch. With this switch you can compare if the settings you choose are actually an improvement.^{117 118}
- **Aux sends:** Extra outputs can be sent individually with these controls. Come in two ‘flavors’, pre- or post-fader:
 - Pre-fader means that the channel fader won’t influence the signal level.
 - Post-fader means that the channel fader will influence the signal level. Post-fader it can be used to control the sound level for another room.
- **Pan or Balance:** This knob controls the virtual position of the signal in the stereo ‘picture’ between the left and right speaker set:
 - Pan (short for panorama) is used on mono channels and balances the output from the channel to hard left to hard right. Or somewhere in between.
 - Balance is used on stereo channels and controls the emphasis on the left or right side of the stereo channels but keeps them on their left/right position.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ In audio processing, **equalization** (or **equalisation**, **EQ**) is the process of changing the frequency envelope of a sound. In passing through any channel, temporal/frequency spreading of a signal occurs. Etymologically, it means to correct, or make equal, the frequency response of a signal. The term "equalizer" is often incorrectly applied as a general term for audio filters. DJ mixing equipment and hi-fi audio components often include so called graphic equalizers or simply equalizer. These are in fact general all-purpose filters, which can be arranged to produce the effect of low pass, high pass, band pass and band stop filters. Only when these filters are arranged so as to reverse the effects of the internal circuitry on sound output, are they operating as equalizers (source: Wikipedia UK).

¹¹⁸ A **low-pass filter** is a filter that passes low-frequency signals but attenuates (reduces the amplitude of) signals with frequencies higher than the cutoff frequency. The actual amount of attenuation for each frequency varies from filter to filter. It is sometimes called a **high-cut filter**, or **treble cut filter** when used in audio applications. The concept of a low-pass filter exists in many different forms, including electronic circuits (like a *biss filter* used in audio), digital algorithms for smoothing sets of data, acoustic barriers, blurring of images, and so on. Low-pass filters play the same role in signal processing that moving averages do in some other fields, such as finance; both tools provide a smoother form of a signal which removes the short-term oscillations, leaving only the long-term trend (source: Wikipedia UK).

¹¹⁹ **Panning** is the spread of a monaural signal in a stereo or multi-channel sound field. A typical pan control is *constant power*. At one extreme, the sound appears in

12.4 What to bring

The first step is to connect your source (CD/minidisk/MP3 player) to the mixing console. For this you'll need cables. And as soon as you bring one (or some) of these sources yourself, consider yourself also responsible for the right type of connecting cables. Of course you can take a gamble and assume that the PA engineer will have all the cables needed at hand, but you can play it safe and bring your own.

Please keep in mind that some of those mixing consoles can be quite big, so a length of three meters for such a cable is useful.

Now if you run your music on domestic equipment most of the time you'll be familiar with the 'RCA' or 'phono' connector. The most mixing consoles however have their line level inputs on 1/4"(6.35mm) TS (tip-sleeve) or TRS (tip-ring-sleeve) connectors.¹²⁰ The same type as those

only one channel. In the middle, the sound is decreased in that channel by 3 dB, and the other channel is brought up to the same level, so that the overall sound power level is always constant.

The pan control in audio gets its name from panorama or panning action in moving image technology. The audio pan control can be used in a mix to create the impression that a source is moving from one side of the soundstage to the other, although ideally there would be timing and reverberation differences present for a more complete picture of movement within a defined space. Simple analog pan controls only change relative level; they don't add reverb to replace direct signal or change delay timing (source: Wikipedia UK).

¹²⁰ A **TRS connector**, also called a **jack plug** (UK) or **phone plug** (U.S.), is a common audio connector. It is cylindrical in shape, typically with three contacts, although sometimes with two (a **TS connector**) or four (a **TRRS connector**). It was invented for use in telephone switchboards in the 19th century and is still widely used, both in its original quarter-inch (6.3 mm) size and in miniaturized versions. The connector's name is an acronym derived from the names of three conducting parts of the plug: **T**ip, **R**ing, and **S**leeve[1] – hence, **TRS**.

In the U. K., the terms *jack plug* and *jack socket* are commonly used for the respectively male and female TRS connectors.[2]

In the U. S., a female connector is called a jack. The terms *phone plug* and *phone jack* are commonly used to refer to TRS connectors,[3] but are also sometimes used colloquially to refer to telephone plugs and the corresponding jacks that connect wired telephones to wall outlets. The similar terms *phono plug* and *phono jack* normally refer to RCA connectors. To unambiguously refer to the connectors described here, the diameter or other qualifier is often added, e.g. *1/4-inch phone plug*, *3.5 mm phone jack*, or *stereo phone plug*, for the three-contact version.

used on older headphones (modern ones generally use 3.5mm mini-jacks, especially if they are for Walkmans etc). There are simple & cheap RCA to 1/4" TS converter plugs on the market, and it's worth the money to have a couple of them with you.

(Photo plugs)

Another important tool is a headphone. For this work the best type are the fully closed ones that enable you to isolate sounds from your environment. Leave the little earplug-phones at home – or throw them away. Those types of earphones are actually bad for your ears!

12.5 **Where to connect**

The most convenient way is if the console has stereo channels free. Most of the time you can find them near the 'master section' in the center or on the right of the console. How to recognize the master section? First find the input channels. They will all be next to each other and they will be more or less identical. (The master section is the more complicated-looking area...) A stereo input channel may be labeled as 'stereo' and the numbering might be odd & even on the same strip. Sometimes when the labeling is missing you can look at the knob (A.K.A. pan-pot) that adjust the stereo position of the sound image. It will then be called 'balance' or 'bal'. You can find it normally above the fader.

If there is no stereo channel available you can take two mono channels. When you're not confining yourself to the music of the (first) [????] 'golden era' (in other words, when your running music in stereo) you'll have to use one channel for the left-hand signal and one for the right. Turn the pan pots all the way to all the way to left for the former and all the way to the right for the latter. Then all you need to do is connect up your sound source. Look for L and R on the connectors if you're using a

The initial application for the TRS connector was in telephone equipment, which explains why, to this day, it is often termed a "phone plug," even though its use in telephony applications ended many decades ago. The connector's association with stereo headphones possibly helped maintain this term (source: Wikipedia UK).

stereo channel, or just remember which is left and right if you're using two mono channels.

Please do not disconnect anything that is already plugged in to the console in order to avoid fatal collisions with the responsible sound engineer. (Unless you really **really** know what you're doing, but then, would you need this manual?)

12.6 Once you're connected, getting sound

The next step is to adjust the channel to the source that you're using. The first step is to adjust the input gain, but to be able to do that you have to isolate the channel that you're adjusting. For this you'll find a switch named 'solo' or 'PFL' (pre fader listening).¹²¹ It's the same function as the 'cue' switch found on disco mix consoles. When this switch is active, the signal will be on the headphones and visible on the meter in the master section.

There will be some other switches near the gain pot but most of them you can ignore and/or should be in their default (off) position. Those can be (not all the mixing consoles are alike on these items):

- '+48', 'P48' or 'phantom',
- 'phase' or 'ø',
- 'pad' or '-20dB',
- 'B' and 'line'.

Only that last two are important when they're part of the channel strip. 'Line' will deselect the microphone input and activate the line-input for your player. With a lot of smaller modern mixers this happens automatically as soon as a 1/4" jack is plugged into that channel. 'B' will select a second set of line-inputs on the stereo channels of some consoles.

Play some music and adjust the gain until the loudest parts of the recording are showing $\pm 0 \sim +6$ dB on the level-meter. The best is to use a recording that is loud and adjust your gain to this recording. Once set this setting shouldn't be changed anymore. If you can't get any reading at all on the meter, check your connections and then check that the

¹²¹ Pre-Fader Listen is a function on audio mixers to control the audio signal before the main fader control (source: Wikipedia UK).

sound source really is generating a signal, e.g. by looking at it, plugging some headphones into it directly etc. It may be on 'pause', not have a disc in etc. You can also plug another sound source into the channel you are trying to use and see if that gets a result. Another approach is to temporarily try another channel. In other words, work methodically to discover whether a signal is being generated and if so, where it is getting blocked on its path to your mixer's master section.

Once you have set the level you can slowly slide the fader up and listen for the signal coming out of the speakers. If not, there will be a couple of things to check.

12.7 ¡Caution!

With the following actions you should keep the channel fader down and after every change you can slide it up for a moment to check if the sound can be heard.

- First deselect the solo/PFL switch so that the meters will show the actual output of the console.
- Then check if the master fader is open.
- If the meter still shows no output and/or you hear no sound, check if the channel is active ('on'), no switch called 'mute' is engaged and, if there are sub-mix channels, that on the channel that you use for play-back the switch 'mix' or 'L/R' is engaged. At that moment you should see level reactions on your main meters.

If at this point there is still no sound coming out of the main speakers the amplifiers are probably muted. This is tricky. It's best if the PA engineer switches these on. There might be a specific sequence required regarding which block of the power-amps is switched on first and which one last.

12.8 Fine adjustments

Once you have the music running, you'll want to fine tune the sound. The tools that are on the console are more extended than those on a standard stereo set. There are various options available. Most of the EQ controls on a mixing console are either three or four band. This means that there are one or two bands in the mid-frequencies. This is very use-

ful with old recordings. There is even the possibility to have ‘sweep’ EQs, where the frequency of boosting or cutting can be chosen. With some old harsh sounding recordings you can search for the most annoying frequency band and cut only that one down.

Those sweep EQs need a little time to get used to. If you ever have the chance to try the sound in an (almost) empty hall take your discs and practice!

This is a point where headphones are handy. When preparing a new ‘tanda’ you can listen to the sound quality and make some pre-adjustments with the EQ.

12.9 Finally! ¹²²

Hopefully at this point you’ve succeeded in getting music on the floor and some dancers too. Now you can start with that game that is so much more important. Have fun!

¹²² This chapter is a simple introduction. If this is not enough for you or if you have questions, you can email mlombaers@mac.com. Wikipedia UK also has interesting info on mixing consoles, equalizers, gain and audio amplifiers.

13 Laptop DJ-ing for tango DJ's ¹²³

13.1 Introduction

More and more tango DJ's use a laptop, and others thinking about switching from CD's to a laptop. DJ's who work with CD's or even MD's seem to be a disappearing breed.

This is not very surprising, for the advantages of laptop DJ-ing are numerous. The average hard disk of a laptop can easily contain 10.000 songs. Imagine bringing 500 CD's to a milonga, you would need a wheelbarrow. Furthermore, a laptop offers great opportunities for categorising your music collection. You can add all sorts of labels to your music: instrumental or vocal, genre, year of recording, composer, etc. A laptop makes your music collection more easily accessible, which allows you to be more flexible in your DJ-ing. And finally, laptops are not so expensive anymore as they used to be some years ago.

Of course there are also disadvantages to DJ-ing with a laptop. The importing and labelling takes up a lot of time.¹²⁴ Also the normalization of sound volume is quite a job.¹²⁵ There are disadvantages to laptops in general. If you consider standardization and compatibility, you will find a lot of differences between several types of laptops. By the way, these are the same problems the PC experienced some years ago. What can be expected is that in coming years also the world of laptops will become more standardized and compatible.

If you consider using a laptop for DJ-ing, you should ask yourself some questions:

- Will I earn enough as a DJ to make it economically feasible?
- Am I a technical enough to DJ with a laptop?

¹²³ In this chapter I will use the term laptop and not notebook. In fact it is the same: a mobile computer, which works on a battery and / or an adaptor and which can do the same tasks as a PC.

¹²⁴ On internet you can find free ware file tagging programs.

¹²⁵ You can also choose to forget the normalization of sound levels and use the mixing console while DJ-ing a milonga.

And if you are already using a laptop for DJ-ing, the next questions might interest you:

- What type of audio files are best to use?
- How do I get the best sound possible?

13.2 Financial aspects

It is not economically feasible for every DJ to buy a laptop. If you don't DJ very often and don't need a computer for other purposes, it would be nonsensical to start laptop DJ-ing. On the other hand, if you already have a laptop, why shouldn't you use it for DJ-ing?

If you DJ regularly (at least once a month), it is likely that you will earn back your investment within a few years. By making a cost-benefit analysis you can make an estimate if it will be profitable for you. Laptop DJ-ing can be profitable if the benefits are greater than the costs. The benefits are what you get paid as you DJ and the costs are what you had/have to invest to be able to DJ with a laptop: buying a laptop and a DJ/music programme, travelling costs, music, etc.

Let me illustrate this with a simple example.

Example

Suppose you DJ every month for 4 hours and you get EUR 12,50 per hour. You buy a laptop for EUR 600,- and have EUR 10,- travel expenses every month. The other instruments you need (headphone, adaptor, cables, etc.) cost EUR 160,-. Every month you buy a CD (the rest you already bought or borrowed from friends) for EUR 10,-.

In the following tables I will show the factious financial process of this DJ enterprise.

Year 1: Staring a business			
Benefits		Costs	
DJ income	600,-	Laptop	600,-
		Travel	120,-
		Instruments	160,-
		CD's	120,-
Total	600,-	Total	1000,-

In the first year there is a loss of EUR 400,-. This loss is mainly caused by long term investments like the purchase of a laptop and instruments.

Year 2: Break even point			
Benefits		Costs	
DJ income	600,-	Travel	120,-
		CD's	120,-
Total	600,-	Total	240,-

The second year is more positive, you already earn EUR 360,-. In total you nearly reach your break even point.

At the beginning of your third year a milonga in another town invites you to come every month and DJ there. They pay you EUR 50,- per milonga and what is more they also pay travelling expenses.

Year 3: Making a profit			
Benefits		Costs	
DJ income	1200,-	Travel	120,-
		CD's	120,-
Total	1200,-	Total	240,-

In the third year you earn EUR 960,-. So totalling the first three years you earned EUR 2400,- and had 1480,- costs. Your profit is EUR 920,-, which is more than EUR 300,- per year.

Of course this example is a simple one. However, you can adapt this model to your own situation. For example, if you DJ more often than once a month and/or get paid better, you will start making a profit sooner. What I wanted was is to show you a way of thinking, which might help you when deciding on laptop DJ-ing or not.

13.3 Software

We (the authors Arnoud and Michiel) work with Megaseg, a DJ programme specially designed for Mac.¹²⁶ So it doesn't work on Windows operated machines. There is however a iTunes version for Windows and a variety of other music/DJ programmes for Windows, like Tractor.

It doesn't really matter what operating system you use (Mac or Windows). What does matter is whether a music/DJ programme does possess the facilities that you (as a DJ) need for doing your job.

What facilities are needed for a DJ programme for tango DJ's? Just as a suggestion:

- Reliability: if a program crashes regularly, it will not make you happy and after some time nobody invites you anymore as a DJ.
- Structured: a program should be structured in a logical, user friendly manner.
- Computability: if your program has troubles interacting with other systems and or programs, you isolate yourself as a DJ.

In this section we will discuss some of the most often used DJ programs in tango: Megaseg, Tractor, iTunes, etc.¹²⁷ The question which is crucial in this discussion is whether a program is suited for a tango DJ, which is of course essentially different from a modern trance or hip hop DJ. Most DJ program we have seen seem to be built for modern DJ's.

**This space is reserved for a discussion on the
various DJ/music programs by Michael Lombaaers**

DJ programmes usually have a lot of facilities which are hardly interesting for a tango DJ. Beat juggling and beat mixing are not necessary for tango DJ-ing, although you will never know what the neotango will bring us.¹²⁸ It is not impossible that the technics which are now used in

¹²⁶ For more info on Megaseg: www.megaseg.com. Megaseg works with iTunes.

¹²⁷ If you work with iTunes and want to know more about the ins and outs the following site, www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/itunes might interest you.

¹²⁸ Beatmixing is a form of mixing two subsequent songs, so that the beat of the first song fades into the beat of the second song. Beatjuggling is the manipulation

neo tango will someday be used in underground neo tango milongas. Maybe a Tango Tiësto will enter the charts in a few years!

13.4 Audio files

Are you technical enough to become a laptop DJ? Well, I would be surprised if you weren't. Laptop DJ-ing allows you to make it as easy or complicated as you want. Before starting to DJ with a laptop, see that you are advised well. We will not discuss the technological aspects of tango DJ-ing in depth, because this is a subject which is changing fast.

13.4.1 Types of files

In digital audio there are numerous types of audio files, which has to do with different encoding systems.¹²⁹ Some of the most widely used types of audio files are: AAC, AIFF, Apple Lossless, MP3, MP4 and WAV.

- **AAC (Advanced Audio Coding)** sounds better than MP3 and is the default option of Apple iPod and iTunes. These music files have a .m4a extension.¹³⁰ The advantages of AAC to MP3 are numerous: more sampling frequencies, supports up to 48 channels, larger encoding efficiency and provides better sound above 16 kHz.
- **AIFF (Audio Interchange File Format)** is a type of audio file often used for containing sound in PC's. It is based on IFF (which is often used in Amiga systems). AIFF is also used often in Apple Macintosh configurations.
- **Apple Lossless** (a.k.a. Apple Lossless encoder, ALE or Apple Lossless Audio Codec, ALAC) is an audio codec, which is developed by Apple and aims at the compression of music without any loss

of two or more music samples to create a new sample of music. Herefore the DJ can use two turntables and one or more mixers. Techniques which are often used in this process are the use of breaks, scratching, backspins and delays.

¹²⁹ Encoding refers to the process of transforming data from one format to another format. The opposite process is called decoding.

¹³⁰ If you want to know more about file extensions, try www.filext.com.

of quality.¹³¹ The compression can be up to 50% of the original file. The extension of an apple Lossless file is also .m4a.

- **MP3 (MPEG Audio Layer 3)** is probably the most widely known audio file, but not the best. In a few years it might become obsolete, since there are so many more codec's which give better sound quality. The extension is .mp3.
- **MP4 (MPEG-4 Part 14)** is based on Apple's QuickTime container format. MP4 uses .mp4 as an extension, but this creates a lot of confusion, because the MPEG-4 container format can also contain audio and video streams. For this reason there are other extensions in use, like: audio only files: .mp4, audio books and pod casts: .m4b (or sometimes .m4a) and MP4 files with audio and video: .mp4 and .m4v, occasionally .mp4v
- **WAV or WAVE (Waveform Audio Format)** is the standard audio file format used by IBM and Microsoft. A WAV file has a maximum capacity of 4 GiB. The file extension is .wav.

13.4.2 SPARS codes

Some CD's still carry the AAD, ADD or DDD code. These codes are called SPARS codes. SPARS is an abbreviation of Society of Professional Audio Recording Studios. This code will tell you what type of studio recorder (analog or digital), mixing recorder (analog or digital) and mastering (always digital) have been used.

The first letter of the SPARS code refers to the studio recorder, the second letter tot the mixing recorder and the last letter to the mastering.

So:

- **AAD** stands for analog studio recorder, analog mixing / editing recorder and digital mastering
- **ADD** stands for analog studio recorder, digital mixing / editing recorder and digital mastering
- **DDD** stands for digital studio recorder, digital mixing / editing recorder and digital mastering

¹³¹ An (audio) codec is a software program, which encodes and decodes digital (audio) data according to a standardized procedure (algorithm). Codec is an abbreviation for **C**ompressor/**D**ecompressor, **C**oder/**D**ecoder, or **C**ompression **D**ecompression algorithm.

Nowadays you don't see the SPARS codes so often anymore, because this system has some great disadvantages. The SPARS code only refers to recorders and not to some other instruments used (like microphones) for recording music. Using the SPARS code as an indication for sound quality is therefore a bit risky, for there are just too many AAD recordings which have a better sound quality than DDD recordings.

13.4.3 File conversion¹³²

File conversion can cause some serious problems.

This space is reserved for a discussion on the ins and outs of file conversion. Will be written by Michiel Lombaers.

13.5 Hardware

For DJ-ing with a laptop you will need some hardware, like a soundcard, cables, adaptor, headphone, etc.

13.5.1 Soundcards

A soundcard is an extension card, which enables a computer to produce (output) or store (input) a audio data. A soundcard (see photo below) contains two transformation facilities: a DA converter (which transforms a digital signal to an analogous signal (sound) and a AD converter (which does the opposite). The AD process is also called sampling. Furthermore does a soundcard contain a mixer which enables the sound volume regulation of the different sources (mike, MIDI, line, WAV).

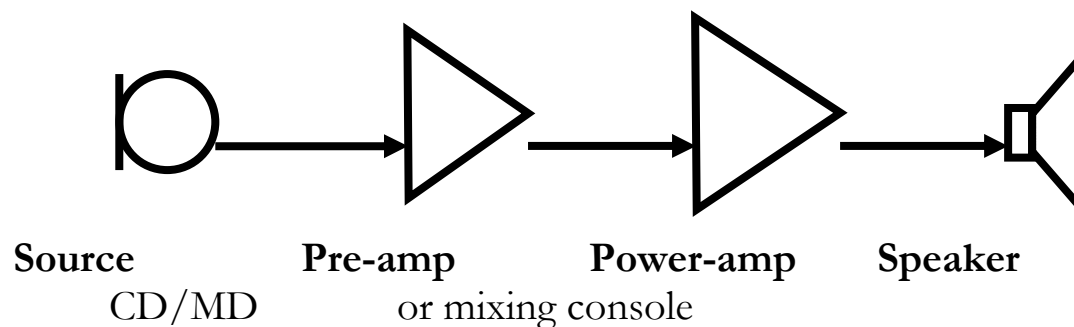
(PHOTO SOUND CARD)

¹³² For those who want to know more about the conversion of audio files, we refer to www.blazeaudio.com (tutorials) en www.hitsquad.com.

The built in soundcard (audio interface) of some computers and laptops produces a mediocre sound quality. But fortunately you have a possibility of installing (or having installed) a better quality soundcard in your computer. It goes without saying that a good soundcard is essential for DJ's. Buy the best sound card there is, but keep in mind the price quality ratio. A very expensive sound card can produce a better sound, but is the surplus price you pay for it reasonable, if you compare it to the surplus sound quality it gives?

Always realise that the audio chain (see figure below) is only as strong as its weakest link. A super sound card in a audio chain with lousy speakers is a waste of money.

Figure: audio chain



What may come in handy is a second (mobile) soundcard, which enables you (if your music/DJ program allows you) to preview the music from your library before putting it into your play list. If you DJ according to a prepared play list, you don't need this function of course. But in our opinion somebody who calls himself a DJ does interact with his audience and does not work with scenarios prepared at home.

13.5.2 Cables, plugs and adaptors

In the next photo you see a audio cable.

(Photo AUDIO CABLE)

In combination with an audio cable it is advisable to have a pair of ¼ inch jacks (see photo below). I remember a DJ in Munich, who was very happy that I brought some!

(PHOTO PLUGS)

Look out when you roll the cable that you don't cause a break in the cable.

This space is reserved for a discussion on the several types of hardware. Written by Michiel.

On the field of electricity there is unfortunately not a worldwide standard. In different parts of the world there are several types of power points (plug sockets), plugs and electric currency. So if you are a travelling DJ, be sure to check what electricity system is used in the country you go to. A good site to do so is Conrad H. McGregor's, where he discusses the lack of standardization on electrics:

<http://users.pandora.be/worldstandards/electricity.htm>. Consulting this site may help you to avoid some nasty surprises.

13.5.3 Headphones

For a travelling DJ a compact headset will be very convenient.

Headphones can be connected to an audio player (CD, amplifier, laptop, etc.) with a jack plug, which comes in two varieties: ¼ inch plug and a 3.5 mm plug.

On the photo below you see (from left to right): 2.5 mm mono, 3.5 mm (1/8") mono/stereo and a 6.3 mm (1/4") stereo jack plugs.

Photo: plugs

Headphones are regular health hazards. Listening too long for a too period to loud music through a headphone can and will lead to temporary or permanent loss of hearing. This is caused by the masking effect; that is that a user of a headphone will put the volume level up to mask the background noises, like public transportation, discos, large crowds, etc.. By getting used to higher sound volume, the pain sensations disappear.

13.6 Tips and tricks

Some tips and tricks we learned in practice:

- Make a regular back up on a rebootable hard disk (Firewire?).
- Bring some CD's (just to be sure), in case your laptop crashes.
- Customize your laptop. You can arrange it the way it works best for you. Do it! What works for you, doesn't have to be functional for another DJ.
- Most tango recordings are mono recordings. Stereo became available to the public in 1958. Recordings before 1958 (which include all tango recordings from la epoca de oro) are mono. These old tango recordings do not contain very much information; very high and very low frequencies are often absent or off low quality. For mono recordings a bit speed of 128 kbps is enough, for stereo recordings a bit rate of 192 kbps or (preferably) 256 kbps is advisable.
- Laptops can be transported very well. (As a matter of fact they were designed to be transported.) If you fly, take your laptop as hand luggage, because you will never know how that handle your suitcase. Another reason is that in the baggage compartments it can be very cold and you just don't know how these extreme changes in temperature will influence your laptops performance. Check the technical data of your laptop!

Also you should realise that a lot of small vibrations (rolling suitcases) can harm your hard disk.

- If you roll your cables in the same way over and over again, they will show some preformed loops, which can cause a break in your cable.
- Most music/DJ programs offer a lot of possibilities to add information to a song. In iTunes I use name of artist, song title, CD ti-

tle, year, genre, composer and remarks. In iTunes you can choose which categories you want to use (Apple J for “weergeave” options). For example I use the remarks category to state whether a song is vocal or instrumental. But I could also decide to label a song as rhythmical, lyrical, energetic, melancholy. In the following section I will discuss the extra categorization possibilities a music/DJ program offers you and which make DJ-ing easier.

- It is a hell of a job, but attaching tempos to songs (beats per minute or BPM’s) is very helpful. There are programs you can use to count the BPM. If you work regularly with tandas with increasing temps, this is very helpful.

13.7 Categorization

A music/DJ program has an advantage: you can attach labels to it. When I started DJ-ing with a laptop, I found this the most difficult and time consuming part. I changed my categorising system a few times, before I discovered a system that works efficient *for me*.

I stored (part of) my music collection in iTunes. I divided my tango DJ-ing relevant music into 9 categories:

- 0 - Cortinas & soundbites
- 1 – Candombe
- 2 – Milonga
- 3 – Speciaal
- 4 – Tango
- 5 – Tango milonga
- 6 – ‘Neofusion’
- 7 – Valse
- 8 – Tango nuevo

In iTunes you can choose from 36 categorising options (Apple J), which should be enough ☺.

I use the following options:

- Name (of song): *La Tormenta (@X)*
- Artist: *Canaro, Francisco*
- Time: *2:36*
- Album: *La Cumparsita*

- Genre: 4 – *Tango*
- Year: 1938
- Composer: *E. S. Discépolo*
- Remarks: *Vocal: ?*

This example needs some explanation:

- In the name category I use (@X); which means that this song contains special instruments or sound effects. I also use (@V) and (@M). This refers to special valse and milonga versions, which I don't categorise under 6 – Valse or 2 – Milonga.
- I categorise on surname, followed by Christian name. There are just too many Roberto, Juan and Francisco's to do it the opposite way. It would become too chaotic for me. For the same reason I deleted suffixes like *y su Orquesta Tipica* and the like. Information like this is usually incorporated into the album title.
- I think year is an important piece of information. Year can tell you something about the sound quality, but more important: a lot of orchestra evolve over the years. Canaro and Di Sarli are good examples of orchestras which did change their music enormously over the decades.
- In the remarks field I noted whether a song is instrumental or vocal (and if so: name of singer). Unfortunately a lot of tango CD's offer rather poor or incorrect liner notes.

This example and its explanation are meant as a inspiration for you to invent your own system, which works well for you. With some creativity you can build your own system. But do keep in mind that too many categories will confuse you, which will damage the functionality of you categorising system.

13.8 Troubleshooting

The technical part of laptop DJ-ing can cause you a lot of problems. On the internet there are some discussions going on about laptop DJ-ing and especially the problems in getting good sound. Some DJ's don't succeed in getting a good sound. And since you work with recordings at

least half a century old, an even less sound quality is not something you want.

In the friends of el corte discussion (end of 2006) some problems came up. Michiel answered questions about internal sound problems.

13.8.1 Internal sound problems

Firstly, for intermitted playback on random spots: there is not enough RAM available for playback.¹³³ When you've got 256MB or less RAM in your rig; add more. 512MB RAM is in a lot of cases a kind of minimum for smooth use. When you've got that already; build a start-up version with nothing else than iTunes. With Windows XP a lot of installed programs are automatically loaded on start-up. This can clog your available RAM. To make it "rock-solid" run it lean & mean.

Secondly, for intermitted playback and weird noises that always connected to the same moment in the music: this can be caused by bad coded MP3. The solution is to re-import the songs preferable from original CD's. If you're going to re-import; consider this: MP3 is the most universal (easy exchange with others) but not the best quality. If you want to use MP3 try or the iTunes converter (not the best but already there easy & trustworthy) or LAME (better quality but more things to set up and slower).¹³⁴ OGG/FLAC/AAC are better quality but not everybody has standard playback for it (OGG/FLAC not on an iPod for example).¹³⁵

Finally, for hum & noises related to hard disk and/or mouse activity: this can be caused by a bad sound card or main board design. You could try the Griffin iMic USB soundcard or try to run on battery.

¹³³ RAM means random access memory. This is a method of storing data, which enables integrated circuits to access data randomly. So every place in the external memory is as easily accessible as another.

¹³⁴ LAME is a MPEG-1 audio layer 3 (MP3) encoder. *LAME* is an acronym for *LAME Ain't an MP3 Encoder*.

¹³⁵ OGG is connected with Ogg Vorbis, which implies an open source-method of data compression (audio files), which is free of copyrights. FLAC means free lossless audio codec.

13.8.2 Ground loop

Another problem is when an audio system produces a low monitor buzz. This can indicate a ground loop. This can be fixed by a ground loop isolator.

In electricity a **ground loop** refers to a electric current (which is generally not desired), in a conductor connecting two points that are supposed to be at the same potential (ground), but are actually at different potentials. Ground loops can harm a electrical system; in this case your audio equipment.¹³⁶

13.9 Conclusion and acknowledgements

Laptop DJ-ing has a lot of advantages but also some disadvantages.

If you DJ regularly you will earn back your investment within a few years. On the other side it will cost you quite some time to import and label your music.

There are a lot of music/DJ programs with all kind of fancy options, which you don't need for tango DJ-ing. DJ-ing with a laptop does presume that you are not 100% a-technical.

As far as I know there is only one coherent story about tango DJ-ing with a laptop: Tipps für den Tango-Notebook-DJ, Teil I & II, which is written by Jonas Luell in 2005. You can find it at www.tangoinfo.ch.

Luell describes hardware (laptop, sound card, cabbles) and software (program and audio files). Also some DJ forums do touch on this subject. For the rest this story is based on conversations with other laptop tango DJ's and our common sense. For technical details I also consulted Wikipedia UK and www.epanorama.net.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ For more info on ground loops: www.epanorama.net.

¹³⁷ Wikipedia UK: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/> and Wikipedia NL: <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/> For technical info only: de Free On-Line Dictionary Of Computing: <http://foldoc.org/>

14 Important tango orchestras

In this appendix we will list some tango orchestras that are 'inolvidable' and should be in every tango DJ's toolkit. These orchestra's are:

- **Alfredo de Angelis** made energetic and rhythmical music, which will always be appreciated by dancers. His music is multilayered, which makes it interesting for all levels of dancers. Recommended CD's: From Argentina to the world and Adios Marinero (EBCD).
- **Carlos Di Sarli** started his career with fast, rhythmical music but switched in 1944 to a slower, majestic type of music. Recommended CD's: Instrumentales volume 1 & 2 (Tango Argentino) and RCA Victor's 100 anos (BMG).
- **Juan D'Arienzo** lured dancers back to the dance floor at the end of the thirties, after tango in twenties and thirties had become more and more artistic than danceable (the decarean school of tango). Recommended CD's: Tango para el mundo & Sus primeros exitos volume 1 & 2 (Tango Argentino) and La Cumparsita (EBCD).
- **Anibal Troilo** made powerful and hard-to-resist-to-dance-to tango music with virtuoso melodies and harmonies. Most of his music is very good to dance to, but in the sixties he also made big bombastic music, which is hard to dance to. Recommended CD's: El inmortal "Pichuco" (EBCD), Anibal Troilo y sus cantores (RCA Victor 100 anos, BMG) and Instrumental 1941-1944 (Tango Argentino).
- **Oswaldo Pugliese** was a great musical innovator. With *Recuerdo* (1921) and *La Yumba* (1943) he surprised his audience and set an example for generations of musicians. His music is big and powerful and invites dancers to dance "big". Sometimes Pugliese's music is too chaotic to dance to. Recommended CD's: From Argentina to the world, *Ausencia* (EMI), *15 grandes exitos* (Blue Moon) and *Recuerdo* (EBCD).

- **Francisco Canaro's** career is probably one of the longest from tango's history (from ca 1916 to 1964), although there are more musicians who had very long careers (Pugliese, Piazzolla and Troilo). Canaro and Roberto Firpo were the icons of the guardia vieja. Canaro's music is very diverse because he was not averse from "eclectic borrowing" of other musicians inside and outside tango's territory. Recommended CD's: From Argentina to the world, Tangos inolvidables and Bailande tangos, vales y milongas (Reliquias).
- **Roberto Firpo**, the autodidactic piano player, arranger and band-leader often played in smaller ensembles. His style can be described as very rhythmical and energetic. Firpo introduced La Cumparsita to the world. The older Firpo's are in tango-milonga style, music from the thirties. His milongas are excellent for salons. Recommended CD's: Alma de Bohemio, Milonga Orilero (both EBCD), De la guardia vieja and Tangos y valsecitos volume 2 (both Reliquias).
- **Miguel Calo** (violin and bandoneon) played with the orchestra of Osvaldo Fresedo, before forming his own orquesta de las estrellas in 1940. His style is romantic. Calo had an ear for good musicians (Emilio Balcarce, Osvaldo Ruggiero, Osvaldo Manzi, etc.) and singers (Raul Iriate, Raul Beron, Alberto Podesta, etc.). His orquesta de las estrellas (orchestra of the stars) hosted a lot of great musicians, who later formed their own equally famous orchestras. Recommended CD's: Miguel Caló Y Sus Cantores and Yo soy el tango (EBCD 34).
- **Ricardo Tanturi** (piano and violin) formed Los Indios in 1933, with whom he played in cinemas. From end thirties he led his own orchestra. Tanturi achieved great fame with the singers Alberto Castillo and Enrique Campos. Recommended CD: Una emocion (EBCD 81).
- **Rodolfo Biagi** (piano) is known for his rhythmic music and the notes he doesn't play. His style is easily recognized. Before form-

ing his own orchestra, he played with D'Arienzo, where he was instrumental in the the orchestra's change to super rhythmic and energetic music in 1935. Recommended CD's: all his Reliquias CD's.

- **Angel D'Agostino** (piano and singer) became famous because of his cooperation with Angel Vargas. D'Agostino's music is calm and powerfully elegant. Recommended CD: RCA Victor 100 Años.
- And there are many more: Quinteto Piricho (Canaro), Enrique Rodriquez, Lucio Demare, Domingo Federico, Miguel Villasboas, Horacio Salgan, Juan Maglio, Pedro Maffia, Francini & Pontier, Alberto Castillo, Francisco Lomuto, Florindo Sassone, Osmar Maderna, Adolfo Carabelli, Orquesta Tipica Victor, Los Tubatango and countless other musicians, singers and orchestras

15 Tango timeline & trends in tango music

15.1 Tango timeline

1880 – 1917: Prehistory & la guardia vieja

- ca.1880: crystallisation of tango
- major sources: habanera, candombe and rural milonga and several indigenous and Afro-European influences
- tango as a primarily improvised form of music and dance (cortes and quebradas)
- musical line ups mostly duo's and trio's, which are regularly changing
- clearly distinct European influences in music
- hardly any singing (only some refrains), and if there is any singing the lyrics are rather vulgar but at the beginning of the twentieth century they lose their vulgarity
- tango has a bad reputation: the reptile from the brothels
- instruments are guitar, flute, violin and only incidentally a bandoneon
- compositions are simple
- mostly amateur musicians, with little or no musical education
- sheet music gains popularity in first decade of the century
- first tango recordings around 1910
- still vaguely detectable (south) European and African influences in tango music
- 1912: Greco forms first orquesta tipica
- 1917: Gardel introduces tango cancion

1917 – 1935: La guardia nueva

- disappearance of flute and guitar, which are replaced by piano, bass and bandoneon
- standard musical line becomes orquesta tipica

- orquesta típicas make more complex compositions possible
- musicians are professional, as sons of immigrants do often get a musical education
- room for improvisation disappeared
- European influences disappeared from tango
- during the twenties the radio as a mass communication medium, comes into existence in Argentina and gains a lot of popularity at the cost of the record industry
- from 1928 the record industry uses electrical recordings and wins back some of the ground it lost
- two streams in tango music: traditional & evolutionary school
- evolutionary school causes lessening popularity of dancing
- focus of orchestras starts to move from dancers to listeners
- 1935: death of Gardel and appearance of D'Arienzo
- D'Arienzo makes energetic music which goes back to composition of la guardia vieja
- other orchestras, like Di Sarli and Troilo, follow D'Arienzo's rhythmic style and play more energetically
- average rhythm also becomes a little quicker
- at the end of this decade focus shifts back a little to the dancers

1935 – 1954: La epoca de oro

- gran orquestas because of economic wealth (WW II)
- compositions become more and more complex
- incredible accumulation of talent in a relatively short period
- example: Calo's Orchestra of the Stars which hosted at one time or other: Salgan, Maderna, Francini, Pontier, Pugliese, etc.
- average rhythm slows down a little (perhaps because of the complexity of the music)
- end of la guardia nueva (economic decline and emerging youth culture)
- music becomes more and more symphonic
- almost complete disappearance of tango as a dance
- Piazzolla goes to Paris

1954 – 1978: Tango Nuevo

- traditional tango goes underground and becomes a marginal phenomenon
- some orquesta survive, but often in a trimmed down set up
- a lot of orchestras fold up and musicians withdrew from the music scene
- Piazzolla combines tango with classical music and jazz and thereby creates tango nuevo
- tango nuevo gains some credit in Europe, Asia and Northern America
- tango remains 'invisible' in Argentina

1978 – 2000: La joven guardia

- gradual recognition of tango nuevo as an innovating force in tango
- junta causes a lot of musicians to flee to Europe (Paris), where slowly a new tango scene comes to life
- renaissance of tango starts with Tango Argentino tour around the world
- in Europe there slowly grows a tango scene, which gives tango in Argentina a new impulse
- death of Piazzolla and Pugliese
- technically outstanding music, but compared to la epoca de oro lacking in emotional depth and more for listening than for dancing

2000 - ? Neo tango

- the use of modern digital computer and sampling techniques meet tango and give it an energetic impulse
- 2000: Gotan Project produces La revancha del tango

- Gotan causes a lot of copy cat bands to produce neo tango music, of which only a few do really add something new to neo tango genre
- future of tango: hard to predict

15.2 Trends in tango music

- Origin

Tango as a form of dance and music originated in the **lower socio economic classes** and gradually was accepted by higher socio economical classes.

- Afro-European influence

The **Afro-European influences** in tango music disappeared as tango grew more sophisticated. In the twenties there were hardly any afro-European influences left. Tango had become Argentinean.

- Musical line up

The **musical lines up** changed from duo's & trio's (in the beginning of the twentieth century) via sexteto & orquesta tipica's (in the twenties and thirties) to gran orquesta's (in the forties & early fifties). After la epoca de oro (mid fifties) several musical line ups were used, but generally the line ups were mineralized due to the drop in popularity tango suffered from the emerging youth culture.

- Instrumental & Vocal

In the beginning tango's were primarily **instrumental**, but starting early twenties tango's were increasingly accompanied by **singer(s)**.

- Amateurs & professionals

As the evolution of tango music progressed (**professionalization**), the musical compositions got more sophisticated.

- Improvisation

As a consequence of the growing complexity of compositions, the opportunity for **improvisation** by musicians in orchestra disappeared completely and was replaced by rigidly composed structures.

- Instrumentation

As the evolution of tango music progressed, the **musical instrumentation** grew bigger and bigger.

16 Copyright & DJ-ing

16.1 Introduction

What about copyright on music?¹³⁸ Do you have to pay if you DJ somewhere? Do you have to pay if you have dance school? And what happens if you don't pay dues when you should have done so? These are important questions, because they can have a great impact.

In most cases a DJ is asked to DJ by other parties. These other parties can include dance schools, milonga organizers, festival bureaus, restaurants, pubs, etc. In the Netherlands the other parties are the ones who should pay copyrights to Buma Stemra. As long as you don't have an exclusive relation with one of the other parties mentioned, a DJ doesn't have to pay copyrights.

On Buma Stemra's website (Dutch copyright organization) you will find the prices for using music. These prices can vary, depending on who is the organising party. For pubs and restaurants there are different prices compared to parties who organise an event. The price can be downloaded via the Buma Stemra site (brochures: *Muziek gebruiken in de horeca* en *Opgaveformulier evenementen*).

When I contacted the Buma Stemra in 2004 (Jury Brantenaar) I was told that a DJ only is responsible for the paying of the copyright dues when he is an organiser of an event. Not paying a due can imply a substantial fine.

Some situations are free of copyright:

- private use for party
- if the composer has been dead for 70 years or more

¹³⁸ In this appendix I will discuss the consequences of copyrights for tango DJ's in the Netherlands only. However if you have information on copyrights on music in relation to DJ-ing in other countries, please send it to me: a.degraaff@hetnet.nl

16.2 More info

If you want to know more about copyrights, we refer to the following websites:

- **Buma Stemra**

<http://www.bumastemra.nl/nl-NL/Auteursrecht/>

Buma Stemra is a Dutch organization which deals with the controlling of the Dutch Auteurswet 1912. Via this link you can:

- find info on the hows and whys of copyright, what Buma Stemra does and international regulations / conventions.
- download several brochures which are relevant for the use of music in restaurants, pubs and dance schools.
- find links to international copyrights organizations, like BIEM, CISAC en CESAC.
- find the complete text of the Dutch Auteurswet (from 1912)
<http://www.ivir.nl/wetten/nl>

- **Wikipedia**

Wikipedia is an internet encyclopedia, which is made and maintained by thousands of volunteers. Since there is no guarantee that the Wikipedia info is right or wrong, you should be careful in using these data.

- <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auteursrecht> gives info on Dutch Auteursrecht.
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright> gives extensive info on English copyright regulations..

17 Suggested reading & interesting sites¹³⁹

17.1 About technics & general works

I didn't come across books on tango DJ-ing, but there are some books on DJ-ing in general. They mainly deal with modern DJ-ing (house, techno, trance and the like). They have some but not much relevance for tango DJ-ing. These books are:

- **Broughton, Bill & Brewster, Frank**, Last night a DJ saved my life. The history of the disc jockey (New century edition), London: Headline Book Publishing, 2006
- **Broughton, Bill & Brewster, Frank**, How to DJ (properly), Bantam Press, 2002.
- **van Terpenhoven, Arne & Beemsterboer, Toon**, Door! Dance in Nederland, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact, 2004.

17.2 About tango DJ-ing

- -, A beginners guide to tango record labels (internet).
- **Brown, Stephen**. Playing music for milongas: the DJ's role. Tango Argentino de Tajés (internet).
- **Brown, Stephen**. The musicalizadore of Argentine Tango: Building a library, How to improve as a DJ & The dancers and the DJ, 2003-2004 (internet)
- **Brown, Stephen**. Classics of tango dance music & A DJ's guide to post-golden-age recordings Tango Argentinas de Tajés.
- **Elshew, Keith c.s.** Programming music for milongas (internet).
- **Fisher, Veronika**, A guide to tango Djing (mailed to me by author, maybe available via Tango DJ forum).
- **Herreman, Tine. W.**, DJ resource and recipes (mailed to me by author, maybe available via Tango DJ forum).
- **Kovalchuke, Oleh**. Argentine tango blog (internet)
- **Morrall, Steve**. Djangology (internet).
- **Muller, P.** Short guide for tango DJ's (internet)

¹³⁹ I refrained from giving the exact links because internet links have a tendency to become obsolete rather quickly.

- **Peel, J.**, Margrave of the marshes. His autobiography, London: Corgi Books, 2005.
- **Tango DJ Forum**, Yahoo group of tango DJ's talking shop, (internet).

17.3 About tango as a social phenomenon

About tango a social, economical, cultural and musical phenomenon many books have been written, although some of them are completely ridiculous. If you want to form a picture of the how and why of tango (and as a DJ should at least be able to answer some questions) we refer to the books mentioned below.¹⁴⁰

- **Allebrand, R.**, Tango. Das kurze lied zum langen Abschied, Bad Honnef: Horlemann, 2003.
- **Aslan, P.**, The evolution of tango music, adapted from Tango stylistic evolution and innovation, UCLA master thesis, 1990.
- **Azzi, S. & Collier, S.**, Le grand tango, The life and music of Astor Piazzolla, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- **Birkenstock, A. & Rüegg, H.**, Tango. De bewogen geschiedenis van een dans. Amsterdam, Arbeiderspers, 2002.
- **Brown, J.C.**, A brief history of Argentina. New York: Checkmark Books., 2004.
- **Caceres, J.C.**, La historia negada / History denied, liner notes from Juan Carlos Caceres CD Murga Argentina, 2005.
- **Campos Salva, C.**, Tango, Buenos Aires: Visor, 2005.
- **Castle, V. & I.**, *Modern dancing*, New York: World Syndicate Co., 1914.
- **Castro**, The Argentine society as social history. The soul of the people. San Francisco, Mellen Research University Press, 1980.
- **Chan, R.**, The making of a tanda, www.loksze.com (2006).
- **Chasteen, J.C.**, National rhythms, African roots. The deep history of Latin American popular dance. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.

¹⁴⁰ If this is not enough for you, contact me at El Corte or send me an e-mail.

- **Canaro, Francisco**, Mis memorias. Mis bodas de oro con el tango, Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1999.
- **Collier, S., Cooper, A., Azzi, S. & Martin, R.**, Tango. The dance, the song, the story. London, Thomas & Hudson, 1995.
- **Denniston, C.**, *The meaning of tango. The story of the Argentinean dance*, London: Portico Books, 2007.
- **Doktorski**, The classical bandoneon, (internet), 1998
- **Ferrer, H. & Brave, W.**, Tango. Muziek, dans en lyriek. Amsterdam, Meulenhoff /Landshoff, 1989.
- **Fuentes, C.**, De Spaanse erfenis. Vijf eeuwen Spaanse invloeden in Latijns Amerika. Houten: De Haan/Teleac, 1992.
- **Graaff, A. de**, Neo tango is here to stay, www.torito.nl, February 2008.
- **Graham-Yooll, A.**, *A state of fear. Memories of Argentina's nightmare*, London: Eland, 1986.
- **Kraayenhof, C. & van Leeuwen, A.** Het leven in 3 minuten, Zaanstad: Nuance, 2006.
- **La Cadena**, Series of interviews with (mostly Dutch) tango DJ's, April 2003 - December 2004. Interviewer: Karin Venverloo.
- **Laird, R.**, Sound beginnings. The early record history in Australia, Sydney: Currency Press, 1999.
- **Lentijo, J.**, *The impact of the show "Tango Argentino". Agony and resurrections in Argentine tango*, www.planet-tango.com: 1998 – 2000.
- **Liner notes** CD Alfredo De Angelis y su Orquesta Tipica: Arentipebeta (Maestros of Tango Argentino BMT 016)
- **Liner notes** CD Tito Merello: Arrabalera (EBCD 59).
- **Ludwig, E.**, Tangolexikon, Der tango Rio Platense, Lexikon, Berlin, 2002.
- **Miller Bailey, H. & A.P. Nasatir**, Latin America. The development of its civilization (second edition). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice – Hall Inc.: 1968.
- **Morales, E.**, The Latin beat. The rhythms and roots of Latin music from boss nova to salsa and beyond. Cambridge (USA), Da Capo Press, 2003.
- **Nau-Klapwijk, N.**, Tango dimensionen, Munchen, Kastell, 2000.

- **Nouzeilles, G. & Montaldo, G.,** The Argentina Reader. History, culture & politics, Durham / London: Duke University Press, 2002.
- **Park, C.,** Tango Zen: walking dance meditation, Tango Zenhouse, 2004.
- **Pellicoro, P.,** Passie voor de tango. Utrecht / Antwerpen, Kosmos 2003.
- **Pfeffer, M.,** History of the tango (internet: 1994-2000).
- **Plisson,** Tango, Heidelberg, Palmyra, 2002.
- **Reinhart,** Tango. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1987.
- **Salas, Horacio,** Der tango, Stuttgart: Abrazos, 2002.
- **Savigliano, M.E.,** Tango and the political economy of passion, Boulder: Westview Press, 1995.
- **Sebastián, A. & Labraña, L.,** De geschiedenis van de tango. Breda, Uitgeverij de Geus, 1988.
- **Sublette, N.,** Cuba and its music. From first drums to the mambo, Chicago: Chicago Review Press Inc., 2004.
- **Sylvester, V.,** *Modern ballroom dancing*, London: Hubert Jenkins Ltd., 1952 (45th edition).
- **Taylor, J.,** Paper tangos, Durham / London: Duke University Press, 1998.
- **Thompson, R.F.,** Tango. The art history of love, New York: Vintage Books, 2005.
- **Turner, D.,** A passion for tango. Dingley, Dingley Press, 2004. **Verbitsky, H.,** *Confessions of an Argentine dirty warrior*, London: The New Press, 1996.
- **Williamson, E.,** Borges, A life, New York: Viking, 2004.
- **www.elportaldeltango.com** (Biographies & Orchestras).
- **www.todotango.com** (The Artists: Singers).
- **www.kidojo.it,** *Interview "Styles of Tango" (part I & II), interview with Yvonne Meissner*, translated by Elisabeth Marsaggia.