Tango, from Perception to Creation:
A pianist’s quest to capture and embody Tango
in performance and composition.

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
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I declare that the exegesis and portfolio are my own work and has not been submitted previously for a degree or diploma to any university. To the best of my knowledge I believe it does not contain any material previously published, written or composed by another person except where I have made direct reference to an author in the exegesis itself.

Kim Cécile Elton, February 2014
Exegesis

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Recital Programmes

New Australian Tango Quartet – 2nd Aug, 2011
Tango Piano Duo, Piazzolla – 18th Oct, 2011
Emerging Artists Piano Duo Festival – 22nd Aug, 2012
Elegancia Quartet and Duo – 5th June, 2012
A Musician’s Journey into the World of Tango – 19th Oct, 2013

Preface and Score: Original Arrangements

Bahía Blanca – Carlos Di Sarli
Desde el alma – Rosita Melo
Milonga del adiós – Pablo Ziegler
Payadora – Julián Plaza
Responso – Aníbal Troilo
Taquito militar – Mariano Mores

Preface and Score: Original Composition

Tango, amor y dolor – para piano
i. El Camino en Soledad
ii. ¡Qué Encuentro!
iii. Recuerdo su perfume . . . y la noche
iv. Esa Descarada
Recordings USB

(Live performance video-recording, duration: 40 mins)

Tuesday 2nd August, 2011

The New Australian Tango Quartet

2. *Bahía Blanca* – Carlos di Sarli
3. *Rosa de Otoño* – G.D Barbieri
4. *Milonga de Mis Amores* – Pedro Laurenz
5. *El Ingeniero* – Carlos di Sarli
6. *Shusheta* – De Juan Carlos Cobián
7. *El Esquinazo* – De Angel Villoldo, Carlos Pesce y A. Timarni
8. *A la Gran Muñeca* – Carlos di Sarli
9. *La Cumparsita* – Gerardo Matos Rodríguez

(Live performance video-recording, duration: 45 mins)

Tuesday 18th Oct., 2011

Tangos for Two Pianos – Astor Piazzolla, arranged by Pablo Ziegler

1. *Libertango*
2. *Soledad*
3. *Fuga y misterio*
4. *Milonga del ángel*
5. *La muerte del ángel*
6. *Tangata*
Tuesday 5th June 2012

*Elegancia* Tango – Quartet and Duo Recital

1. **Payadora** – Julián Plaza – arr. C. Elton
2. **Responso** – Aníbal Troilo – arr. C. Elton
3. **Desde el alma** – Rosita Melo – arr. C. Elton

Saturday 19th Oct. 2013

(Studio sound-recording, duration: 20 mins)

A Musician’s Journey into the World of Tango

*Tango, amor y dolor – para piano*

i. **El camino en soledad**

ii. **¡Qué encuentro!**

iii. **Recuerdo su perfume... y la noche**

iv. **Esa descarada**
Acknowledgments

It has been a privilege to work with my contemporaries in this field: The remarkable South American musicians from New York and Buenos Aires – Dr. Alfredo Minetti; Analía Goldberg; César Salgán; Pr. Facundo Bericat; Pr. Joaquin Amenábar; Nathaly Ossa; Octavio Brunetti; and Raúl Jaurena – and the musicians and scholars from Brisbane, Australia – Dr. Dan Bendrups; Dr. Gerardo Dirié; Dr. Louise Denson; Dr. Therese Milanovic; and Dr. Yitzhak Yedid. A special thank you to the collaborating musicians who dedicated time and effort to perform with me in an unfamiliar and exotic genre: Andrew Shaw; Cathy Roberts; James Ball; and Natalie Jacobs.
Autography

To give the music genre of Tango an identity I will consistently capitalize the “T” of Tango throughout. I will include derivatives of Tango such as Tanguero and Tanguera. Titles that are capitalized in English are not necessarily capitalized in Spanish. Titles are spelled in the vernacular.

Glossary

Bandoneón – the concertina-like instrument intrinsic to the Tango sound

Contrabass – double bass

Milonga – a type of folk music, designates the “occasion” and place where people gather to dance Tango, from the River Plate region

Milongueros – habitual Tango dancers

Rioplatense – a person, or other phenomenon belonging to Montevideo and Buenos Aires

Tango nuevo – new, contemporary Tango instigated by Astor Piazzolla

Tanguero – habitual participant and practitioner of Tango
Abstract

Tango is an established genre in the international music scene, as exemplified by the compositions of Horacio Salgán, Mariano Mores, Astor Piazzolla and others. However, commercially produced Tango sheet music, with melodies and harmonic changes, does not fully correlate with the music expression one hears performed by musicians – Tangueros from Montevideo and Buenos Aires. The main problem is that the distinctive music expressions that elicit emotional responses and appear to define the uniqueness of tango, are not notated on the page. This constitutes a learning challenge for the musician who is foreign to the genre and its original context. Therefore, she must attune her perception of what may be missing and implement a more robust notation of those emotion inducing features. This need is justified as the musician is seeking to compose, arrange and perform music utilizing standard music notation.

This thesis presents an attempt to bridge the gap, through performance-centred learning, to reveal Tango’s inherent characteristics. The outcome will give an outsider the opportunity to develop skills in Tango music to achieve a performance style closer to the genre’s authentic musical practice. Therefore, contextual knowledge and mastery of Tango piano vocabulary in an accessible form provides an avenue to play, arrange and compose in a manner that reflects a different approach to understanding pianism in the Argentinean Tango.
Introduction

Prelude

Relevant personal experiences have prepared me to explore Tango: An experienced pianist; a creative musician; and a habitual Tango dancer. I have faced my share of the human condition and its emotional upheavals. I was subjected to the great heights and richness in love and the depths of despair and sorrow – emotions that are prevalent in the compositional realm of Tango. Musically, I have always felt rapture when playing piano music by composers distinguished by their intense rhythmic expressions, like Alberto Ginastera, Béla Bartok, and Isaac Albéniz, and have indulged in the heartfelt rubato of Frédéric Chopin. The musical styles of bossa-nova, samba, and swing are equal favourites for their combination of rhythmic drive and the longing in their harmonic and melodic designs. Elements of this musical repertoire are also found, and magnified in Tango music that has a powerful rhythmic drive and intense expression.

When the time came in my life to express myself in new ways, Tango lured me with its distinctive sound, its history and its intense character. Tango excites me, it enriches the way in which I interface with the world and with life, and it has become a medium through which I express my excitement and gratitude to the broader Tango community.

Throughout the deeper exploration of the performance-led doctorate program opportunities arose to play in a variety of ensembles exploring Tango. Tango in a traditional quartet, “The New Australian Tango Quartet”; Tango in a contemporary quartet, “Elegancia Tango” of
which I wrote the arrangements for; and Tangos of Piazzolla for a piano duo; and a clarinet
and piano duo – the four part suite of *L’Histoire du tango* (The History of Tango). The definitive
performance, however, was a solo piano performance of my original Tango compositions.

During this intense period I had an opportunity to study over Skype with Dr. Alfredo
Minnetti. He is an anthropologist, a classical and Tango pianist and producer of culturally
immersive Tango shows in New York. Dr. Minnetti encouraged me to confront the notion of
“embodiment”. Soon enough I became more aware that my understanding was becoming
imbedded reaching a point of being one with what I was learning from and about Tango.
The Tango techniques and characteristics ceased to be just information to exert a function. I
became immersed in Tango concepts, as if dancing with them. I became more obsessed,
corporally, intellectually, and emotionally. I feel I can observe now with more discernment
by having experienced many more facets of Tango. I have reached the point where I see
Tango manifested in the pieces I have composed. I am now dancing with Tango at the piano.

My doctoral thesis was guided by the fundamental question: “How can a pianist capture and
embody Tango in performance, arrangement and composition?” I addressed it by undertaking
an investigation through the following five processes: Firstly, I studied the origins and the
arrangement tradition followed by researching the distinctive stylistic and technical features
and phrasing styles of Tango through identification, isolation and transcription. I listened
extensively to recordings of prominent Argentinean pianists; viewed film footage; and
experienced live performances to contextualize the above features. Next, I conducted
interviews with contemporary Tango musicians residing in New York and Buenos Aires comparing their pathways, influences, styles, ensemble experiences and thoughts on Tango as a cultural form. The information gathered assisted my research by gaining specialist knowledge about performer approaches and musical innovations of pianism in Tango in order to realize my own presence as a musician in the genre. Subsequently, I reflected on the learning skills of playing Tango on piano including delivery of phrases; technique and physiology; emotion in Tango; feeling in dance; comparisons with Jazz and Classical music; and the embodiment process.

Equipped with this foundation, I utilized what I have learned by incorporating the new knowledge into live performances that were recorded and examined. The formations comprised of the following instrumentation: violin, piano, bandoneón, and double bass (traditional quartet); clarinet, viola, piano and double bass (contemporary quartet); piano duo; clarinet and piano duo; and finally, piano solo. Through integration of the new knowledge gained I created original arrangements of Tangos for the contemporary quartet and compositions of new Tangos for solo piano. A selection of quartet arrangements, in four different styles, have been rigorously analysed to clearly display an understanding of the distinctive technical and stylistic features of Tango and their application. The compositions are inspired by original poetry demonstrating the use of metaphor and embodiment in this artistic practice.
My life as a pianist

Training in music began in earnest when I won a scholarship to study Classical piano at the Australian National University in Canberra. This was no surprise to my parents: I had played the piano continuously since I was three years of age and thought of no other future profession. The scholarship culminated in a diploma - Licentiate of Music. Following on, I trained over a period of two years to teach in, what was then known as, the “Yamaha Music School” where I taught young children ages four to six years in groups. However, a move to the country area of the Bega Valley, New South Wales was the most immersive learning curve.

During this “country-musician” period of fourteen years, whilst nurturing my young children, I established a music school where I taught piano and coached singers and, as the business prospered, I employed other teachers and administrative staff. In addition, I was a sought-after pianist/arranger intensely involved in community music. Musical experiences flourished whilst accompanying singers, choirs and theatrical groups. I performed piano regularly in concerts and stage shows that included: Cole Porter’s – *Kiss Me Kate*; Andrew Lloyd Webber’s – *The Phantom of the Opera*; Gilbert and Sullivan’s – *The Mikado*; Handle’s – *Messiah* (with combined choirs from various country areas of New South Wales); as well as improvised performances in theatre sports. My immediate involvement in community music was due to there being a solid reputation of Elton-family musicians in the Bega Valley prior to my arrival (my grandmother, uncle and father), and to be one of the few pianists in the area, at the time, with attributes of versatility and enthusiasm! The next significant stage of musical experience was heading north, the “city-musician” period.
Shadowing my teenage children’s move to Queensland for their university education gave me an opportunity to develop my career. I found work as a freelance jazz and contemporary solo pianist, and was also employed as an accompanist for ballet and contemporary dance at the Queensland University of Technology. The new direction of my work ventures necessitated more advanced skills in performance and arrangement of Jazz along with improvisation so I embarked on further study in a Bachelor of Music degree at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University.

My interest in Tango was sparked back in the last semester of the degree. In a post-tonal analysis class I had chosen to analyse – *Four, for Tango* – the composition Astor Piazzolla wrote for the Kronos Quartet. Looking deeper into this genre, I was struck by the fact that there were several facets of Tango music: Tango to be danced to, Tango to be listened to, Tango to be played and Tango to philosophize. I became inquisitive and decided to take Tango dance lessons. Apart from feeling rather awkward learning the dance, which was more than just executing steps, this subjective experience allowed me to see, feel and hear how the musical idiosyncrasies related to the dance moves. Starting out only as a short term plan I soon became addicted to Tango, the music and the dance.

As an integral part of the Tango dance community in Brisbane I found opportunities to learn more as a piano player of Tango: six weeks of study with the celebrated local violinist, Moshlo Shaw; gigging at milongas as a trio with two guitarists; accompanying singers and playing solo piano.
A fund-raising *milonga* was organized by the Tango dance community to assist in purchasing a *bandoneón* for me to learn and perform which, in turn, would enhance our community’s identity. Our trio played traditional Tango music followed by my newly formed four piece Sunshine Coast band – *Brillo de Sol* – performing original music, in a Tango-jazz style, from my album “*Rosas para vos*” (Roses for You)(cdbaby.com). The event was well supported by the wider Tango community. They purchased copies of the album and joyfully congratulated me for my contribution. However, a few people walked out in disgust adamantly declaring that my music was not Tango!

My concern about the genuine-ness of composing and performing Tango, in what makes Tango distinctive and unique, led me to immerse myself in its native environment. This next stage became the “international-period”. I undertook four weeks of formal intensive training in Buenos Aires, Argentina: piano performance and arranging with Professor Facundo Bericat and just a few lessons on *bandoneón* with Professor Joaquin Amenábar. Both teachers had strong connections with Tango communities in Australia.

Furthermore, I frequented many *milongas* and took private dance classes. Every Thursday at 2pm I religiously sat with the *porteños* to experience the musical richness of the *Orquesta de Buenos Aires* (The Orchestra of Buenos Aires) performing a wide range of Tangos. A pianist was always featured centre-stage performing as an integral part of the orchestra. There were many other cultural experiences that enriched my study trip, including getting to know how
people live and survive in the city. I teamed up and rehearsed with a local singer culminating in a performance at a milonga. After this, I continued on to Paris where Argentinean Tango evolved in the 1920s and influenced Tango in Buenos Aires. My brief experience of Parisian-Tango left an impression of elegance and reverence similar yet somehow more reserved in comparison to Tango in Buenos Aires.

However, after all this experience, frustration crept in. The closer I came to the answers the more questions I had. I wasn’t grasping the deep emotional phrasing and sounds in my playing that I could hear in the piano of Tango music. How can I play what I hear and what are the intricacies that makes Tango so different? My frustration lay in the fact that what I heard in the music was not what I saw on the musical scores. To put it simply: Published sheet music of Argentinean Tango does not include notation of its striking expressive features. The crucial question came then on whether I can genuinely imbue my piano playing with Tango. At this point I decided to take an intensive performance-led research project at the Queensland Conservatorium.

Theory and Method

I have engaged a strategy of performance as research, where research methods and findings are related to and contextualized in performance. Consequently, the performance is then subject to research. The capacity of this research demonstrates a substantial expansion of that of the performing artist. According to Pakes’ article, “Art as Action or Art as Object,” in describing the main difference between a practitioner-researcher and a conventional performing artist, is:
“[t]he extent of her awareness of, and explicit reflection on, her art as an appropriate creative response to the initial question. Or, it may be the intention to approach art making as research-based rather than ‘purely’ artistic endeavour. But in either case, a premium is placed on the intention agency of the creator. . .” (Bendrups, 2011 p.23).

My intention was guided by the fact that there was a no other choice but to be “led” by research in the art of Tango performance. I was an outsider restricted by location, culture, and limited local mentors. In action this meant scrutinizing audio recordings and video footage of Argentinean performers; interviewing Tango musicians from Argentina and New York; and demonstrating this knowledge in the way of lectures and recitals. These activities were comprehensively analysed to delineate issues and to consolidate that, in fact, I was progressing in Tango. The new knowledge was reconstituted in the consequent performance. My task was to recognize a confluence of my practice (Classical and Jazz), Tango and piano. These are the three domains of practice that are implicated in this research and my thesis is situated within.

The over-all methodology engaged to reflect on the learning process is auto-ethnographic. It takes the form of a narrative journal where I am the researcher and also the participant. Ellis describes an auto-ethnographic approach: “Usually written in first-person voice, auto-ethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms. . . They showcase concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality and self-consciousness (Ellis, 2004 p. 38). A reflective monologue exposes my experiences and describes how they contribute to my understanding.
These experiences comprise of cultural immersion, arranging, composing, performing, and embodiment.

To assist with the extraction of technical information of the distinctive stylistic and technical features of Tango music, I slowed down recordings to aurally analyse and, to add another dimension, I utilized the computer program – Variations Audio Timeliner 1.0.1 (2002-2012, Indiana University) for a visual representation. This program assisted my aural analysis by graphing and annotating the audio analysis on a timeline. The intensity, focus, and comprehension of listening, was paramount to progress. All devices were engaged including IPOD, DVD’s, CDs, You-tube, and Zoom Recorder. Listening with focussed attention, whilst practising the piano and later, to recordings of my arrangements and compositions assisted greatly with the process of refinement.

I have interviewed, in an official capacity, by email a selection of prominent contemporary South American Tango musicians. Emails were sent to ten recipients, however, only four replied. Fortunately the complying entourage was a cross-section of musicians that that ranged in age, gender and styles. These include: Octavio Brunetti; Analía Goldberg; César Salgán, (the son of the famous pianist/composer Horacio Salgán); and, bandoneonist, Raúl Jaurena. The information derived from this survey has been presented as a comparative dialogical essay that includes my personal experiences to-date.
The strategies engaged in arrangement and composition varied greatly. Each style of Tango guided and influenced the formula or approach. The arrangement processes evolved by practically applying the knowledge of earlier research of distinctive stylistic and technical features; listening to recordings of the work; and ruminating over solo piano or other ensemble arrangements of the same work.

*Bahía Blanca* by Carlos Di Sarli, arranged for piano duo, was the earliest and most natural experience of arranging Tango due to my being accustomed to the instrument’s idiosyncrasies as a pianist and applying it to two pianos. In addition, having hands-on experience of playing this Tango with a traditional quartet – *bandoneón*, violin, piano and double bass – clearly identified distinctive Tango-features of other instruments that could be adapted and included in the piano duo arrangement.

The first in the collection of Tango arrangements for contemporary quartet is the Tango *Responso* by Aníbal Troilo. This work was expanded from a solo piano arrangement by Alfredo Minetti. An experimental line-up of instrumentation – clarinet, viola, double bass and piano – required exploration of tonalities and performance techniques. These included emulating the sonorities of the *bandoneón* through the combination of viola and clarinet as well as the writing-out of Tango-phrasing to express the Tango-*rubato* speaking style.

Julián Plaza’s piano composition *Payadora* was arranged in, and guided by, the style of a spirited *milonga*, symbolizing lyrics concerning competitions and conversations. The
approach to arranging this was unconventional yet inspirational. In keeping with the *milonga* style I gave each instrument a pseudo character that impersonates the singers in *milonga* and created a conversation to inspire and imaginatively coalesce with the music.

The *vals* (waltz) style of *Desde el alma* by Rosita Melo, arranged for the contemporary quartet, was inspired by Minetti’s transcription for – violin, guitar, piano and contrabass – from an orchestral arrangement by Pugliese. My task was to arrange for different instrumentation in the quartet setting – clarinet, viola, piano and contrabass – and maintain its integrity. To achieve this I focussed on being creative with Tango-*rubato* phrasing, a feature well-pronounced in the *vals* style.

It is important to point out that Tango is a style as well as a genre: the style can be in simple quadruple or simple duple time. The arrangements were mostly directed by the style – *Tango*, *milonga*, or *vals* – and the particular ensemble formation – piano duo or quartet. In contrast, the process of composing original Tango was predominantly guided by inspiration derived from the embodiment of all Tango expressions: Emotion, poetry, philosophy, and dance.

A different creative approach was undertaken for the original composition. *Tango, amor y dolor* – Tango, love and sorrow – is a suite of four Tangos for solo piano. The compositional process was driven by a personal understanding, reflection and inspiration from life-metaphors considered to exist in the emotional realm of Tango. The inspiration appeared in the form of original poetry that was expressed as a prelude to each of the four Tangos.
and, as a collective, linked together to form a Tango-narrative. In addition, each piece is representative of a style of Tango yet explores the distinctive Tango-features in a new ways.

Ethical approval was granted for this research under the Griffith University Protocol number QCM/14/11/HREC.

Scope and Limitations
The exegesis is balanced by the findings creatively presented in the portfolio. The portfolio includes creative work, accomplished over a period of three years: five live video recordings of performances, in a public setting and in a recording studio, six scored arrangements for ensembles; and a suite of four compositions for solo piano. The folio displays one hundred and twenty six pages of musical scores presented with prefaces that pertain to each of the arrangements and compositions.

In the exegesis I have taken the view that I am the one who is learning and demonstrating Tango on piano which may differ to another pianist with a different background. I am looking to actively contribute my findings to community environments where it is useful and where other musicians, dancers, and scholars will want to engage with me in the hope that, as a collective, we will make a difference.
The doctoral project is very much focused on the role or place of the piano and doesn’t really consider how the voice or other instruments might experience Tango. However, playing techniques and distinctive features of double bass, viola, clarinet and *bandonéon* are briefly mentioned to denote the relationship to the overall Tango style and to explain the characteristic sound of Tango in an ensemble.

Initially, I was limited by my standard of piano technique in performance. Therefore, I was challenged particularly when performing more demanding solo piano works. The accumulation of performing experiences, along with piano lessons focused on piano-technique, stimulated a rapid improvement in my playing over the course of three years. The examiner will note that the recordings in the portfolio will demonstrate how the level of technique, along with musicality, developed over the period of the doctoral project.

The scope of the interviewees is limited to a cross-section of South American Tango professionals in whose work I am personally interested and may not represent the views of others in the genre. There were several non-responders to the request for an interview, therefore I am not aware of their views which may disagree with the information gathered. In addition, I have not differentiated between male and female views, other than pointing out the historical evidence of women-instrumentalists not having been recorded. In my informed opinion, gender is not an issue in the present day Tango scene.
Chapter Summary

My expertise in which to achieve a doctoral level product is reflected in the magnitude of what I have completed. I have consulted experts in the genre in all perspectives of my study and have remained steadfast in my goal to actively contribute to Tango in community music. I have specialized Tango for piano by narrowing down the research to develop my performance, arrangement and composition skills; presented a substantial creative output of arrangements and compositions; and have exhibited these aspects in the form of visual and audio representations of progress.

Following on from this intense study, I plan to widen my scope and apply for grants to write and produce Tango-cabaret shows that include dancers, singers and musicians to expand my repertoire of compositions and arrangements.
Chapter 1. Literature Review

The following definitions offer a brief overview of Tango: “Tango: A Latin American song and dance genre” (Grove, 2001 p.395); “Tango is music and dance of nostalgia and melancholy, centred on one city – Buenos Aires” (Garland, 2008 p.73); and “Tango: A dance originating in urban Argentina in the late 19th century” (www.oxfordmusiconline); “The tango is a complex popular genre that involves dance, music, poetry, philosophy, narrative, and drama” (Clarke, 2002 p. 25).

Two valuable resources launched my research with an informed account of areas integral to my topic: Ercilia Moreno Cha’s chapter on Tango in the The Garland Handbook of Latin American Music and María Susana Azzi’s contribution to the book From Tejano to Tango – a comprehensive historical overview in the chapter titled – The Tango, Peronism, and Astor Piazzolla during the 1940s and ’50s. Moreno offers succinct and pertinent background information defining Tango’s chronological stages, events and the significant artists. Azzi’s chapter expands a specific stage of Tango during a crucial period where politics and Tango intersect and Piazzolla’s music is at the forefront.

. . . Piazzolla’s tango came out of the porteño scene that was dependent upon Peronist support and patronage. But it engaged an internationalist musical culture (jazz, classical, etc.) that was anathema to Péron and his xenophobic following. Thus it was created by the Peronist aesthetic but transcended it at the same time (Azzi, 2002 p.39).
Alejandro Drago’s research submitted in 2008 – *Instrumental Tango idioms in the Symphonic works and Orchestral arrangements of Astor Piazzolla. Performance and Notational Problems: A Conductor’s Perspective* – has been of great assistance to my research for techniques incorporated in my arrangements of Tango. He discusses the special idiomatic effects – *yeites* – for strings and piano with sketches and clear explanations. Drago describes the Tango manner of attack in performance:

In allegro tempi, on strong beats and/or accented notes, the attack in all tango instruments (piano, *bandoneón*, violin, double bass, guitar, etc.) tends to be harder, more edgy that would be considered standard for classical playing on the same instruments. In fact, in stringed instruments this often means playing a number of bow retakes that would be considered excessive and unjustified in classical music (Drago, 2008, p.60).

Drago also discusses the rhythmic formula of 3-3-2 intrinsic to Tango along with influences prevalent in Piazzolla’s music. “Piazzolla based most of his compositional work on tango musical elements, and although his compositions incorporated a broad array of musical influences – ranging from jazz to Klezmer and Stavinskian harmonies – the core of his works remained faithful to tango sources” (Drago, 2008, p. 1).

A journal article by Martin Kutnowski – *Instrumental Rubato and Phrase structure in Astor Piazzolla’s music* – discusses the emotional elements of Tango music and lyrics that are expressed most vividly in the stylistic feature of *Tango-rubato*. The Tango singer has the
freedom to improvise with the rhythm of the melody to give weight and meaning to the words. The results bring about highly irregular syncopation. Kutnowksi asks:

How was instrumental *rubato* different from the vocal one, from which it obviously derived? Quite simply, and especially in faster *tempi*, rhythmic syncopations needed to be written down, needed to be made explicit for the whole ensemble to follow. The virtuosic nature of many “New Tango” arrangements thus had a decisive influence in the definition and standardization of such rhythmic formulas (Kutnowski, 2002, p. 108).

I have consulted two method books for understanding some of the technical features of Tango on piano: *Curso de tango* (Course of Tango) by Horacio Salgán (2000), and *Metodo Progresivo de Piano Tango* (Progressive Method of Tango Piano) by De Elia & Trepiana (2009) both published in Spanish. I have based the discussion of the distinctive technical and stylistic features on Salgán’s chapter on piano from his Course of Tango and the construction of the piano accompaniment styles were derived from studies in the Progressive Method of Tango Piano. The combined resources were a reliable foundation, a starting point that encouraged creativity.

The manner of performing some distinctive features are addressed in Robert Farris Thompson’s book - *Tango, the Art History of Love* (2005). There are several detailed references to the *arrastre* or “drag” feature. Thompson quotes Salgán’s description of *arrastre*: “…an effect of percussion where tonal clarity is not the goal but rhythm, in blurred
sound . . . kept in the bass, where it rumbles and growls as it pushes things forward” (Thompson, 2006 p.171).

Thompson’ offers information that is valuable to my research into Tango’s genesis. The habanera is thoroughly examined by Thompson. He suggests:

The secret of the habanera’s longevity is its seductive bass pattern. The habanera bass, still audible in milonga, is outwardly simple: a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note and two eighth notes. Every other beat is strong, da ka ka kan, da ka ka kan. This invites off-beating. In fact the habanera bass could be characterized as the E=mc2 of Afro-world ballroom. It promises – and delivers – release of energy (Thompson, 2006. p. 112).

He explains further:

Habanera as dance is hard to find in the twenty-first century, though old steps appear in the Argentine instruction book published by Lugones in 1969. As music however, it permeates milonga to this day – though at a much faster tempo . . . By the time of Julio de Caro’s brilliant “Tierra querida” (Beloved Land) of 1927, tango had absorbed habanera rhythmic structure. De Caro added slide and drag effects on violin and bandoneón, placing them in the melody where you might least expect them; but these rich innovations should not conceal the fact that he a tangoized the habanera (Thompson, 2006 p.117).
Other significant contributions to the origins and exploration of the distinctive features of Tango are: Simon Collier’s chapter in the book – *Tango!* (1995); his journal publication - *The Popular Roots of Argentine Tango* (1992); as well as Marta Savigliano’s – *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (1995).

In Collier’s journal publication he explains in more detail how the elements of the pre-tango musical forms were made manifest in the Tango:

> The tango . . . was just a fusion of disparate and convergent elements: the jerky semi-athletic contortions of the *candombe*, the steps of the *milonga* and the *mazurka*, the adapted rhythm and melody of the *habanera*. Europe, America and Africa all met in *arrabales* [suburbs] of Buenos Aires, and thus the tango was born – by improvisation, by trial and error, and by spontaneous popular activity (Collier, 1992 p. 97).

In the book *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* the author, Savigliano, discusses how difficult it has been for scholars and musicologists to describe the distinctive stylistic features of the “authentic” Tango. Her research has presented some strong evidence regarding “authentic” features of Tango rhythm. From the – *Anthology of Tango of the River Plate – region*” by Novati and Cuello, Savigliano quotes:

> . . . by 1913 an identification of tango and “tradition” was well established in Argentina and that the resulting genre became “a definite representative of our music”. In order to distinguish the “authentic” tango from previous variants, they propose to isolate
some “permanent and determinant features of the style”. Moreover, “The essential element is the total rhythm, a result of the constant rhythmic interaction between melody and accompaniment” . . . silences, syncopations [syncopations], displacements of accents, and acephalous phrases, intervene and transform the rhythm into a characteristic ritmo quebrado [broken rhythm] (Savigliano, 1995 p. 161).

The latter part of this quote clearly explains a distinctive rhythmic style that is particularly prevalent in Horacio Salgán’s piano music.

In addition, Savigliano quotes Novati and Cuello again for an interesting view to the origins of Tango:

In Cuba the African slaves developed new music and dances intermingling their traditional rhythmic sounds with a variant of the French contre-dances already appropriated by the Spaniards; the resulting habanera . . . made its way into Europe and simultaneously into other New World colonies where it intermingled with local styles. The tango andaluz . . . the Brazilian maxixe, and the tango rioplantense . . . were the offspring of this process . . . the milonga collided with tangos of the African slaves and the tango andaluz [following on] “authentic” tango argentino appears on the scene (Savigliano, 1995 p. 160).

Savigliano goes on to define and discuss the Tango criollo (creole Tango) in relation to national identity “[Tango criollo is] considered to be the most “antique” and closest to the original, the
one that generated the rest” (Savigliano, 1995 p. 162). Mostly, Savigliano engages rhetorically-charged language with a focus on dance, race, lyrics, class and gender. Furthermore, she presents concepts on exoticism and eroticism of Tango all of which are not relevant to my research.

Another book that focuses mainly on the Tango dance, poetry and gender conflicts is the book – *Paper Tangos* by Julie Taylor. She presents Tango from the viewpoint of a dancer and an anthropologist. Her book explores the conflicting meanings of Tango for women and the roles of male and female. The only facet of this book that was useful to my study is Taylor’s approach of auto-ethnography.

The book – *¡Tango! The dance, the song, the story* – is a traditional discourse of history that presents the evolution of Tango in chronological order. In addition to the Tango’s origins and genesis, Collier covers the history of the early *orquesta típica* (the typical orchestra); the first recordings; the first publications of sheet music; and the Tango *canción* (song). María Susana Azzi offers some significant information that describes Tango developments from the “Golden Age” – 1920s to 1950s – and includes relevant background of the legendary Tango artists Carlos Gardel and Aníbal Troilo. She continues to discuss music up to the 1990s that includes the cutting-edge artists Salgán and Piazzolla and the New Tango, *Tango Nuevo*.

*The History of Argentina* by Lewis satisfied the need for understanding how Tango is placed from a historical perspective. He presents viewpoints of economic growth and decline,
population distribution, wars and military interventions. Furthermore, the writer discusses how radio broadcasts and motion pictures helped to popularize Tango songs and describes other aspects of cultural development including the significance of the “Golden Age.” Lewis states:

The “Golden Age” produced significant and rapid changes in Argentina. Its population was transformed by immigration. The weight of the immigrant population in the country’s urban centers made it seem more European than American in character . . .

Buenos Aires emerged as an important literary and cultural center. Visitors as well as locals began calling it the “Paris of South America” . . . The city’s theaters were numerous and vibrant . . . The Teatro Colón opera house, opened in 1907, reflects this age of ambition and opulence (Lewis, 2003 p.70).

The creative music writing component of my study was largely assisted by a clear and comprehensive book – *Hearing and Writing Music* – by Ron Gorow. His book is a highly valued resource and fundamental for the arrangement and composition endeavour. Gorrow begins with an inspirational quote from Stravinsky: “I had only my ear to help me; I heard and I wrote what I heard. I am the vessel through which Le Sarcre passed (Gorrow, 2002 p. 1).

A significant dissertation extends the discussion to embodiment of Tango. The author of *A Pianist’s Guide to Argentine Tango*, Y. Granados states:

Deciding the appropriate interpretation of a piece of music can be very difficult, no matter which musical style it exemplifies. Moreover, if the style of the piece is new or
foreign to the interpreter, then the responsibility is even greater. One has to be open or sensitive to this new musical form. Before getting involved in its performance, pianists should be aware of the certain characteristics of the style, its roots, its origin, its past and its evolution. In other words the performer needs to understand this new language and know the subject in depth in order to represent adequately this new musical form (Granados, 2001 p. 6).

Granados describes the importance of understanding Tango music as a cultural phenomenon as well as a musical form. Granados quotes Hector Stamponi, a highly respected Argentinean musician: “It is now time for the owners of the literature scenes to abandon the theory and experience the poetic essence of tango” (Granados, 2001 p. 7).

Granados includes five interviews with prominent artists in the Tango field and their quotes are thought-provoking especially in the area of interpretation. In addition, the dissertation presents some information about prominent artists: Aníbal Troilo, Osvaldo Pugliese, Horacio Salgán and Astor Piazzolla.

Another pointed reference is to the journal publication – *Tango Renovation: On the Uses of Music History in Post-Crisis Argentina*. In this journal, M.J Luker primarily discusses the renewal of Tango by contemporary ensembles. He declares:
It [Tango] is a complex domain of music making in which the past is sonically brought to bear on the present, which, in turn, is a commentary heard on the past (Luker, 2007, p. 2).

Moreover, Luker presents an attention-grabbing historical overview of Tango “. . . tango’s golden age can be marked, not by the end of the war, but, appropriately by a song: Carlos Gardel’s recording of “Mi Noche Triste” (My Sad Night) in 1917.” The statement highlights the extent to which Tango music is deeply-rooted in the culture of the people. My research, therefore, required careful inclusions of cultural aspects such as song, dance, philosophy, and poetry to outline inter-relationships with the music.

The article by Ramón Pelinski’s – Embodiment and Musical Experience – concerning embodiment of music in performance, was a worthwhile introduction to this aspect of my study. He quotes Sartre:

“. . . music is immanent to conscience as far as it is an object constituted as a correlate of an intentional perception, i.e. of actual, full and direct personal experience, in which senses, emotion, and mind participate together. Although music as an acoustic event exists outside our conscience, we can only affirm its existence as far as we have experience of it. Music and conscience are given to us simultaneously: by essence exterior to conscience, music is relative to it (Pelinski, www.sibetrans.com p.18).
The article – *The Tango Metaphor; The Essence of Argentina’s National Identity* – C.S Nielson and J.G Mariotto, covers socio-economic and political areas. However, the concepts offered on the kinetics of the dance as a cultural form was supportive of my experiences in Tango dancing.

Unlike more mechanical dances that are choreographed along well-defined patterns, the tango is biological and organic in design, and limitless in its conception as a dance. The poet Leopoldo Marechal expressed it in stating: “Tango ...that infinite possibility (Nielson and Mariotto 2006 p. 20).

Lawrence Kramer’s journal article – *Music, Metaphor and Metaphysics* – expands the topic of music performance as a contributor to and collaborator with metaphysics and metaphor.

The book – *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body* – by Sandra Reeve offers thought-provoking concepts although her work did not resonate with my discipline of study. However, Lawrence Shapiro’s – *Embodied Cognition*, and Naomi Cumming’s – *The Sonic Self*, gave some perspicacity of my experience for explaining embodiment in creative practice.

In addition to the aforementioned literature, I possess and routinely consult resources from a sizeable collection of recordings and published scores of Tango music mostly acquired in Buenos Aires. The academic website of todotango.com has been of considerable assistance as well.
Chapter Summary

This literature compilation represents a strong and informative basis for this research. Morena Chá and Azzi offer an overview of the genre; technical features of Tango are discussed in great detail by Drago and Kutnowski; Salgán, along with De Elía and Trepiano provide a practical application to the piano; Lewis provides historically related aspects; Taylor offers an auto-ethnographic perspective; and in-depth research dedicated to Tango is offered in books by Collier, Savigliano and Thompson. Furthermore, authors’ concepts that consider the embodiment aspect are diverse and useful. They include: Granados, Nielson and Mariotto, Kramer, Reeve, Shapiro, Cumming and Pelinski. The scene is set for researching to reach my potential in Tango.
Chapter 2: Perception of Paradigms in Pianism

The expressive paradigms, patterns or inflections associated with Tango are those of Buenos Aires, Argentina and differ from other styles such as Tango from Andalucía, Spain. In this chapter I will discuss an understanding of such paradigms. Firstly, a succinct overview of the origins of Tango provides a launching point that will lead into the tradition of Tango arrangement. The scene is thenceforth set to introduce the distinctive stylistic and technical features. Lastly, a discussion of the contributions of prominent Argentinean pianists will contextualize the paradigms in Tango-pianism.

Origins of Tango

Prior to the emergence of Tango, elements of musical forms, particularly those of milonga and the habanera, were combined during a rich period of creativity where musicians, poets, and dancers improvised together. Oxford dictionaries on-line describe the milonga as “a type of dance and music from the River Plate region” and the habanera as “a Cuban dance in slow duple time, a late 19th century dance of Havana,” (www.oxfordmusiconline.com).

Collier remarks that the milonga is “the local Argentine dance . . . evidently very popular in the 1870s . . . sometimes referred to, significantly, as ‘the poor man’s habanera,” (Collier, 1995 p.40). The milonga is discussed in more detail in the following chapters.
According to Thompson’s — *Tango, the art history of love* — the *habanera*, with the characteristic bass-line rhythm (dotted eighth-note followed by a sixteenth-note and two eighth-notes), was composed for piano during the late 1800s. The habanera travelled from Cuba to Madrid and Buenos Aires around 1850. “Its wide diffusion . . . was facilitated by Cuba’s sheet music publishing industry” (Thompson, 2005 p.116).

In Buenos Aires, Tangos were written in a style similar to *habanera* with melody and simple accompaniments propelled by the *habanera* bass-line. The outcome of a rich period from the late 1800s to early 1900s produced the early Tangos. The sheet music of Tangos was readily available and, consequently, became a tradition in home music-making.

Trained musicians including Anselmo Rosendo Mendizabal (Afro-Argentinean) composed and published the earliest known music for piano in a style known as *tango criollo para piano* (creole Tango for piano). Mendizabal’s Tango, *El enterriano* (The Man from Entre Rios) composed in 1897 “was a classic in the history of the tango . . . the first tango structured in three sections, the first and third of sixteen measures, and the second of thirty-two measures” (Thompson, 2005 p.173).

The Arrangement Tradition

The Tango sheet music for piano provided an opportunity for arrangements to be made for other instruments and ensembles. Specialist arrangers became necessary to rework the scores for ensembles, preserving the presence and contributions of the *tango para piano*
(Tango for piano). Duos and trios developed with the piano replacing the guitar in the trio of guitar, violin and *bandoneón* (the ubiquitous squeeze box in Tango) and expanded further by the addition of the contrabass. The inclusion of a second violin and a second *bandoneón* created the *sextetos típicos* (classic sextet): piano, bass, two violins and two *bandoneóns*. Eichelbaum provides a time frame of some developments. He states:

> We can properly speak of the tango “sextet” due to the fact that beginning in 1923-1924 these groups become, dare I say, the “institutionalized” form of instrumental tango. Already-composed works undergo arrangements that reaffirm their musical traits; composers begin to write new pieces, knowing that they will be [arranged and] played by these “sextets” (Eichelbaum, 1994, p.4).

Collier categorizes the styles into “schools” of Tango: the evolutionary school, (1920s to 1990s); the avant-garde school which branched off from the evolutionary school (1950s to 1990s); and the traditional school (1920s to 1950s).

The 1920’s saw an aesthetic and technical evolution both in the composition and performance of tango music . . . An element of competition among themselves speeded up the creative process. The result was a division of the tango into two schools, each with its own musical structure and style: the ‘evolutionary’ school and the ‘traditional’ school. The members of the ‘evolutionary’ school were committed to the improvement of the tango through the study of melody, harmony and interpretative techniques, a process which they felt sure would result in a more
complex and refined tango. The traditional school stressed rhythm, and produced an
infinitely more danceable tango (Collier, 1995 p.119).

The *Orquesta típica* (typical orchestra) produced a distinctive sound that soon became
strongly identified with the emerging Tango genre. The piano part evolved to incorporate
distinctive technical and stylistic features of the other instruments; *cantabile* (singing) styles
of famous singers like Carlos Gardel; and innovative features specifically for the instrument
itself.

The functions of the piano in the *orquesta típica* are many. Horacio Salgán explains such
functions in his book *Curso de Tango* (Course of Tango), a “how-to” resource for all
instrumentalists and arrangers. He discusses the accompaniment of the piano as providing a
rhythmic and harmonic foundation; rhythmic support to the *bandoneóns* and bass, passages
of *ligados* (legato), passages of staccato, passages of *enlace* (linking), the feature of *efectos
de campana* (bell effects) and various formations of melodic lines.

Distinctive Technical and Stylistic Features

There are three main categories and subcategories of Tango features. I will employ Salgán’s
model for understanding melody and decorative features – *adornos* – and De Elía and
Trepiano’s model for rhythmic accompaniment styles. In some instances the above features
are described in both methods. However, I have focused on the method that has the clearer
or more comprehensive explanation for piano. The features will be outlined and then discussed in greater depth.

1. **MELODY**

   *Principales melodías* – main melodic lines played in both hands

   *Fraseado* – the stylistic treatment of *rubato* and *cantabile* in the shaping of melodic phrasing

   *Pelotita* – the stylistic acceleration of a phrase

2. **DECORATIVE FEATURES**

   *Campanas* – bells

   *Octavados* – played in octaves

   *Adornos típicos* – typical ornaments

   *Bordoneo* – bass string guitar style

3. **RHYTHMIC ACCOMPANIMENT STYLES**

   *Marcado en 4* – a technical feature of accentuation of rhythm in bass-line and accompaniment

   *Yumba* – a stylistic feature of *marcado en 4*

   *Marcado 3-3-2* – a technical feature of patterned accentuation

   *Arrastre* – a technical feature consisting of a preparation of the downbeat

   *Yumba arrastre* – a stylistic feature expanding the preparation of the downbeat
MELODY

The melody in the piano is the first area of Salgán’s method. A common way of treating the melody in Tango is by doubling octaves. Melodic lines (in parallel motion), can include: 1. Melodic lines played an octave apart, 2. Melody in three octaves with right hand playing a double octave and left hand playing a single line an octave below, 3. Right hand double octaves with left hand single line melody a 6th below, 4. Right hand a fifth within an octave with left hand single line melody a 6th below, 5. Right hand a fifth within an octave and left hand melody with triad below, 6. Combinations of the above. The melodic feature can occur in various registers for expressive purposes. The following example: Lines played an octave apart with a 6th and triad, is taken from my arrangement (found in the accompanying portfolio) of Bahía Blanca by Carlos Di Sarli.

Figure 1.

Lines played an octave apart with a triad and 6ths, Bars 1 – 3

Melodic phrasing in Tango owes much to the vocal innovations and explorations of Carlos Gardel (1917 – 1935), the famous singer of Tango. Gardel had been influenced by the great Italian opera singer Enrico Caruso, who often performed in Buenos Aires. Thompson
comments: “Italian music left traces, bel canto refinements in the art of Gardel” (Thompson, 2005, p.59). Gardel gave meaning to the lyrics of the Tango canción (song), expressing the sentiment of deep emotions of love, melancholy, and nostalgia. Gardel’s vocal style, in turn, influenced the melodic phrasing of instrumentalists. Aníbal Troilo delivered his phrases on bandoneón in a similar way to Gardel’s singing.

The word frase (phrase) or fraseado (phrasing) can be marked on the piano score indicating that a solo is to be expressed in a speech-like vocal style. To phrase (frasear) or “to speak” (decir) is an essential feature of Tango genre. The fraseado also taken from my arrangement of Bahía Blanca is shown here in the bass.

Figure 2.

_Fraseado, bar 25-26_

![Fraseado, bar 25-26](image)

The elements of melodic phrasing include a wide range of dynamics and sudden changes in dynamic, accelerando and rallentando, syncopation and accentuation, and cantabile and rubato. Cantabile (singing) and rubato (elasticity in tempo and rhythm) are the most
prominent features of melodic phrasing in Tango. A phrase can begin later or end earlier than written. Kutnowski discusses the influence of instrumental *rubato* relating to lyrics of Tango songs:

... all good singers introduced some kind of rhythmic, melodic, or dynamic distortion, whether in agreement or not with the natural accent of the words, as dictated by expressive needs. Such rhythmic transformation very often consisted in arriving at the end of a phrase somehow faster [sooner] than required, thus giving an impression of anxiety, as if the person were losing control over his or her own emotions. One of the resulting effects of this quasi-recited singing is, of course, a highly irregular syncopation... [he goes on to say, in reference to *Siga el Corso*]... this rhythmic emphasis obviously brings a much more expressive effect on the words "take off your mask / I want to know who you are!" (Kutnowski, 2002, p.3).

Figure 3.

*Rubato, quasi-recited singing style*

![Figure 3: Rubato, quasi-recited singing style](image)

(adaptation from Kutnowski in Spanish – C.Elton)
The example above demonstrates in the first four bars, how the phrase was scored and then, in the subsequent four bars, how the same phrase was performed. It is important to note that this stylistic phrasing occurs while the groove of the accompaniment and its metronomic pulse remains steady in order for the shift in melodic phrases to become evident and effective in expression.

Astor Piazzolla phrased in a similar way as seen in this example from *Adiós Nonino* (Farewell Nonino). Drago describes the feature, of arriving at the destination before the bar line, as “cross - bar line syncopation” (Drago, 2008 p.138).

Figure 4.

Syncopation, arriving before the bar line

![Syncopation](image)

(*Adiós Nonino* transcription C. Elton)

A similar “forward moving” feature of *rubato* is called *pelotita* (the little ball). The performance practice is to imitate the momentum of a ping-pong ball as it strikes the floor and gradually bounces in acceleration. Below are some possible phrases that could be performed in this manner.
The next area of Salgán’s method explains decorative features, known in Spanish as *adornos* that include the use of *acciaccaturas*, *appoggiaturas* and *glissandi*. Other embellishments that appear frequently are *efectos de campana* (clanging bell effects), *octavados* (octaves with *appoggiaturas*), typical ornaments of *enlace* (linking-cadence) and *bordoneo* (rhythmic decoration).

*Efectos de campana* (bell-effects) can be played as a harmonic major or minor second in the higher ranges above the treble stave. In addition, they can embellish the first note in a melodic phrase or as an accompaniment figure in combination with octaves imitating the performance...
practice of the *bandoneón*. The feature is often syncopated in 3-3-2 rhythm shown here in the second bar.

Figure 6.

*Efectos de campana* – bell effects, bars 34-36

![Musical notation](image)

*(Bahía Blanca arr. C.Elton)*

*Octavados* (octaves with grace-notes or sixteenth-notes) extend the range and embellish melodic lines. They are often referred to as *ciríaco octavados* after this feature’s pervasive use by *bandoneonist* Ciríaco Otiz. *Octavados* can ascend or descend over two or three octaves or as a single *appoggiatura* tied to a harmonic octave. They are featured as two sixteenth-notes ascending in the third bar of the following example.
Adornos típicos de Di Sarli (Typical decorative features of Di Sarli) Enlace (linkage-cadence) features were invented by the remarkably talented pianist/composer/conductor Carlos Di Sarli (1903 – 1960). They became a stylistic ‘trademark’ of the musician “... stressing delicate, elegant rhythm especially for dancing” (todotango.com). The enlace feature can melodically decorate an imperfect cadence of (I-V) or a perfect cadence (V-I). This stylistic feature for the piano is discussed in greater detail in chapter five: Tango Arrangement.

The accompaniment style of the bordoneo derived from the bass string, bordon, of the guitar is often played on the piano. The left hand part evokes the thumb-playing of the guitarist with the first dotted-quarter note in each bar acting as a pedal point. A three-three-two (3-3-2) rhythmic pattern is implied in the bass line with the right hand eighth-notes filling in-between. The example below demonstrates how this decorative feature is applied to the harmonic progression of dominant – tonic – dominant (in first inversion) – to tonic.


Figure 8.

*Bordoneo* arranged for piano

1-2-3 1-2-3 1-2

(example arr. C. Elton)

**RHYTHMIC ACCOMPANIMENT STYLES**

De Elía and Trepião’s method presents progressive piano studies in rhythmic accompaniment styles. The following discussion highlights the styles most pertinent to the genre. Tango can be thought of in four beat units, four eighths or four quarters. *Marcado en cuatro* (marked in four) is an articulation that places the accents on beats one and three of the bass line left hand.

Figure 9.

*Marcado en cuatro* (marked in four)

(Bahía Blanca arr. Bar 1 – C. Elton)
*Yumba* (pronounced “zhumba” as in “jelly”) is a stylistic feature of *marcado*. In 1946 pianist-composer Osvaldo Pugliese composed the Tango titled “*Yumba*” featuring his creation of the rhythmic manoeuvre known as *yumba*. This feature can be played on both piano and contrabass. The driving rhythmic pattern is known as *El yumbeado*. *Yumba* has evolved from the Tango accentuation of the first and third beats in a four-beat bar, a rhythmic feature that originated with Julio De Caro of the evolutionary school in the 1920s. The explanation of *yumba* is given here by Luker:

> El *yumbeado* is a rhythmic pattern that places an extremely heavy accent on the first beat of a duple meter bar followed by very light emphasis on the second beat, marked only by the piano player touching a single low note in the instrument’s [low] register. The title of Pugliese’s composition is [an] onomatopoeic representation of this rhythm-YUM-ba YUM-ba. YUM-ba etc. (Luker, 2007, p. 75).

Drago statement adds to this description:

> Pugliese would underscore this effect [of the left hand] by transposing the chord of the right hand one or two octaves higher. In this way, he created a momentary void in the middle register, well known to orchestrational theory for its particularly dramatic effect (Drago, 2008 p.96).

Minetti describes the standard performance practice technique to play the *yumba* as follows:

> In the left hand the first and third beats are accented, (middle register) the second and fourth beats are softer, playing a single note (the lowest note) or a cluster of notes in
the low register. The right hand will accentuate the accompanying chords in the same manner except the second and fourth beats are very soft and staccato (Minetti, personal communication, November 11th, 2011).

Marked time of 3-3-2 is made up of three groups; three eighth-notes, three eighth-notes, and two eighth-notes. The following example outlines the rhythmical marking in the bass: quarter-note, eighth-note rest, quarter-note, eighth-note rest, eighth-note, and eighth-note rest. Beat one in the lower octave (8vb) is typical of this Tango feature.

Figure 10.

Marcado 3-3-2

(Bahía Blanca arr. Bar 18 – C.Elton)

A distinctive technical feature of the bass line in the left hand is known as arrastre, literally “to drag”. The manner of performance of some pianists makes it become a stylistic feature (explained later as yumba arrastre). The arrastre is also played by bandoneón, contrabass, violin, viola and cello. It has been described as being “a way of preparing different acoustical parameters of a strong beat” (Drago, 2008, p. 74). Notes preceding the downbeat may or may
not be written, sometimes only indicated by a diagonal line therefore the *arrastre* can be a type of articulation as well as a performance practice.

In strings and *bandoneón* the *arrastre* can be a syncopated anticipation of the beat with a crescendo to an accent on the downbeat. For piano the *arrastre* can be an eighth-note or sixteenth-note group preceding the downbeat. It is important to understand the accent is commonly on the first note of such pick-up group, not on the target-downbeat. Minetti describes it like this: “the accent is not on the destiny but on the place of departure.” (A. Minetti, personal communication, September 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2011). The accented pick-up note(s) deliver(s) a dragging motion *retraso* (slight delay). These notes can be *cromático* (chromatic pick-up) notes that start from the distance of a major 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, or perfect 4\textsuperscript{th}; a run of scalar notes, an eighth-note approach an octave below, or a sweep of notes with the palm of the hand. The examples below demonstrate *arrastres* in the left hand. The first example, figure 8, shows an eighth-note approach an octave below occurring at the end of bar one and the end of bar two. The second example, figure 9, demonstrates chromatic pick-ups at the end of bar one into bar two and again at the end of bar three into bar four. A detailed explanation of the performance practice of *arrastre* is offered in the forthcoming chapter – *Developing Skills to Play Tango*. 
In the book, *Tango, the art history of love*, Thompson devotes a section to *arrastre y síncope* (the drag and the offbeat). He describes them as “a strong and significant rhythmic device in tango music” and refers to Horacio Sálgan’s *Curso de Tango* (Course of Tango): “Sálgan defines *arrastre* as the intense rhythmic slurring of several notes together. Bass notes so blurred give push to the tango, like a roll on a bass drum.” (Thompson, 2005, p 182) Thompson expands the description of *arrastre*. “… it is *arrastres* that make tangos move, with a peremptory roll and off beating sequence”. According to Sálgan the *arrastre* evolved in the orchestra of Aníbal
Troilo in 1943 but originated in the country dance music of the gauchos of the Pampas (cowboys of the Argentinean plain). Thompson also suggests the *taconeos* (Andalusian stomping pattern) may have originally influenced the gauchos’ dance music. Thompson goes on to say musicians today, like Pablo Ziegler, Néstor Marconi and Pablo Aslán believe the *arrastres* are “quintessential to tango” (Thompson, 2005, p.182).

The stylistic feature combining *yumba* with *arrastre* enhances the driving rhythm of the *yumba*. It can be described as: accented first and third beats, and unaccented second and fourth beats (that play the lowest note or cluster in the bass). The performance practice engages the palm of the hand to facilitate an ascending *glissando* with *crescendo* from the low register up the keyboard leading to the next accented downbeat. Towards the end the *glissando* has a *retraso* (slight delay) to create the “dragging” aspect of the *arrastre*. The performance practice of this feature is expanded upon in the chapter – *Developing Skills to Play Tango*.

**Contributions of Prominent Argentinean Pianists**

One cannot isolate pianism without considering the context of the ensembles and arrangements. Horacio Salgán is one of the few musicians who developed the artistry of composing and performing solo piano however, the duos, trios, quartets, quintets and, in particular, the classic sextet provided many opportunities for the paradigms in Tango-pianism to expand and flourish.
Throughout the century of Tango history there was a constant movement of musicians from one orchestra to the next. Therefore, the distinctive stylistic and technical features of Tango for piano came into existence through exposure to, and collaboration with other musicians. The contributions of some of the most talented and highly skilled pianists will be discussed to contextualize these features, notably six pianists from the 1940’s to 2000’s: Fulvio Salamanca, Carlos Di Sarli, Osvaldo Pugliese, Horacio Salgán, Gerardo Gandini and Pablo Ziegler. Recordings of the forthcoming Tangos mentioned can be heard on the academic website todotango.com.

Pianist/leader/composer Fulvio Salamanca (1921 – 1999) began playing professionally in his teens. He played for the orchestra of D’Arienzo in the traditional school for seventeen years. D’Arienzo had a distinctive style of arranging variations of Tango-melodies in a running style with neighbour tones and broken chords. Thompson describes D’Arienzo’s style as “. . . happy, fast, staccato and pianistic” (Thompson, 2005, p.187). Salamanca contributed greatly to the orchestra of D’Arienzo. Ferrer states: “. . . he [Salamanca] showcased his technical skill and virtuosity, capable of following the rhythmical unrestrained motion of D’Arienzo and adding beauty to it” (Ferrer, todotango.com).

Salamanca went on to form his own orchestra and his interpretations “had the trademark of a peculiar syncopated [swing feel] rhythmical beat” (Ferrer, todotango.com). Salamanca’s personal style follows the evolutionary school. The recording of the Tango in 1958, Qué te pasa, Buenos Aires (What’s happening to you, Buenos Aires) (todotango.com), demonstrates
the pianist’s technical skills. Dynamic arrastres, swing feel and a stylistic phrasing of the aforementioned technical feature of melodic line – right hand double octaves with left hand single line melody a 6th below – is clearly evident.

In contrast, pianist/leader/composer Carlos Di Sarli, El Señor del Tango (The Lord of Tango) (1903-1960), was not a virtuoso but an innovator. He began playing Tango in the aristocratic band of Osvaldo Fresedo of the evolutionary school. Taking on board the smooth aesthetics of Fresedo, Di Sarli formed his own band, which did not adhere to any schools of Tango. An Argentinean critic, Monjeau, describes the Di Sarli style as having “. . . a certain spareness (una cierta parquedad) and means this as praise; his bass register phrasings are unpretentious and cool” (Thompson, 2005, p. 188). Moreover, Azzi states:

“Although influenced by Osvaldo Fresedo’s ensemble, Di Sarli drew an entirely different sound from his own superb band, emphasizing melody without sacrificing rhythm. In his orchestra the piano prevailed, and his own left hand was prominent” (Collier, Azzi, Cooper & Martin, 1995 p.149).

Di Sarli is the least understood of all the pianists. He never allowed any solos in the ensemble and the piano, seemingly solitary, was set apart from the rest. However, Di Sarli’s innovation linked the orchestra and the piano together. Di Sarli’s elegant and danceable style with stylistic features of enlace, campanas, octavados and glissandi are demonstrated in the recording in 1955 of the Tango - Don Juan (Mr. John) (Di Sarli, 2005).
Pianist/leader/composer Osvaldo Pugliese, (1905-1995) is a musician whose style evolved over his life-time and whose music is performed today by the popular Tango band “Color Tango”. Pugliese is part of the evolutionary school and contributed over a period of fifty five years to the history of Tango. His music portrays the aesthetic of lyricism and melancholy, with a strong danceable rhythm. Thompson states: “... he [Pugliese] rethought the tango with blue notes, Stravinsky, and undreamed—of intensity” (Thompson, 2005, p. 199).

Pugliese championed the use of syncopation and counterpoint. A feature of syncopation peculiar to his style is a variation of *marcado en cuatro*. The left hands accent beats *one* and *three* while the right hand syncopates on the “*and*” of beats *one* and *three*. Pugliese was influenced by African rhythm evident in his innovation of the stylistic feature *yumba*. His composition *La Yumba* (1952) demonstrates the peculiar syncopation and the *yumba*. Pugliese’s 1948 recording of *Negracha* (an endearing term originally for a woman of colour) exhibits his counterpoint style and *marcado 3-3-2* syncopation (todotango.com).

Horacio Salgán, (1916 –) avant-garde pianist/arranger/composer expanded the use of syncopation with imaginative development of rhythmic subdivisions to create a stylistic feature of a “rhythmic matrix”. Novati and Cuello describe Tango’s “authentic” feature of *ritmo quebrado* (broken rhythm) as “the total rhythm” (Savigliano, 1995 p.161). Excitement is created by metric displacement often occurring in several layers of texture. The 1962 recording of Salgán’s composition *A Don Agustín Bardi* (a homage to the composer, Mr. Agustín Bardi), and the 1964 recording of *A fuego lento* demonstrate this use of complex
syncopation. A highly evolved version of *ritmo quebrado* (broken rhythm) is demonstrated in *A Don Agustín Bardi*.

To complete this examination of great Tango pianists, I would like to embrace noteworthy pianists of Astor Piazzolla’s bands, Gerardo Gandini (b. 1936) and Pablo Ziegler (b. 1944). They contributed the art of improvisation from other musical realms into Tango. Gandini is a renowned modernist composer, piano virtuoso and improviser of Irving Berlin songs. The introduction to *Adiós Nonino* recorded on DVD by the BBC demonstrates his modernistic approach by his use on non-tonal gestures and extended piano techniques (Piazzolla, 2010). Ziegler is a celebrated *Tanguero*, jazz improviser; composer and arranger of Tango music. His legendary piano duo arrangements of Piazzolla’s music where recorded on the CD – *Los Tangueros* performed by Pablo Ziegler and Emanuel Ax in 1996.

**Chapter Summary**

This discussion offers a brief and rich contour of the innovations and development of distinctive technical and stylistic features in Tango on the piano. The chapter describes the evolvement of the *habanera* into the earliest published Tangos; how the piano scores were a foundation for the tradition of arrangement for ensembles, in particular the classic sextet; and contextualizes the distinctive features, derived from the methods of Salgán along with De Elía and Trepiana, through the contributions of prominent Tango pianists. These early explorations have enhanced my perception of Tango.
Chapter 3: A Musician’s Presence

Interviews with Tango musicians

I am a musician seeking to deepen my practice by researching the experiences and knowledge of music-specialists in the Argentinean Tango genre. A survey of the available literature reveals that there is a scarcity of information about contemporary Tango practitioners, especially in the academic domain. Therefore I decided to interview high profile international Tangueros; deliberate their responses; and correlate them to each other and to my own experiences and perceptions. The desired outcome is to address the ongoing process of asserting my presence as a musician in the practice of Tango.

The interviews explore a broad spectrum of areas of pertaining to a profession in Tango music. These include: The path that led the Tangueros to Tango; the influences of the great masters; the various styles of playing Tango music; how the Tango ensemble works best; the relevance of song, dance and philosophy to the performer; and the evolution and survival of the Tango as a cultural phenomenon. ¹The selected interviewees consist of pianists, Octavio Brunetti

¹ Biographical information about these artists is available at their websites:

www.facebook.com/cesarsalgan
www.tangodeoro.com/ojosdetango/analia.htm
www.rauljaurena.com
www.octaviobrunetti.com
(b.1975), Analía Goldberg (b.1974), César Salgán, (b. 1958), and, bandoneonist, Raúl Jaurena (b.1941). Specific criteria have been formulated to generate legitimate outcomes: The Tangueros are full-time professional musicians originating from South America; perform internationally; and are diverse in age and gender. Primarily the research focus involves the perspective of Tango-pianists. However, bandoneonist Raúl Jaurena has been included to offer another point of view, having played alongside legendary masters of Argentinean Tango.

The purpose of this comparative study is to unfold information that may draw together ideas for guiding my own presence in the Tango environment, as an Australian pianist from a Classical and Jazz background. Current research into the process of self-development suggests the following:

The idea of the self as a kind of focus, or relatively unchanging core aspect of individual’s personalities, has given way to a much less static and more dynamic view of the self as something which is constantly being reconstructed and renegotiated according to the experiences, situations and other people with whom we interact in everyday life. (MacDonald, Hargreaves, Miell, 2002 p.2).
Certainly this is true in the realm of music where exposure to and exploration of unfamiliar genres can inspire constant renewal of one’s profession. Recognizable examples of this have been the artistic pathways of figures such as the cellist Yo Yo Ma, the guitarist Al Di Meola, and the Kronos Quartet. Yo Yo Ma is continuing to search for “new ways to communicate with audiences, and a personal desire for artistic growth and renewal” (www.yo-yoma.com); Al Di Meola is “… a pioneer of blending world music and jazz” (www.aldimeola.com); and the Kronos Quartet who play a diversity of music including – Webern, John Adams, Thelonious Monk, Jimi Hendricks and Piazzolla – and have “a commitment to reimagining the string quartet experience”(www.kronosquartet.org).

Pathways Leading to Tango

In recounting the pathway which led them to Tango, the interviewees all described the importance of a sensory immersion in Tango, which they experienced within their families and social groups. The family influence on young musicians is paramount and extends into the professional life. Research evidence has shown that “… the combination of the parents’ family histories, emergent expectations, role allocations and current dynamic interactions with the household plays a central role in defining musical identity” (MacDonald, Hargreaves, Miell, 2002 p.77).

Goldberg chose her career as a professional Tango-pianist as a consequence of her Tango-dancing father and the familiar environment of the milongas. “Mi padre baila Tango y me
llevó a las milongas y a aprender a bailar desde muy joven.” (My father took me to social tango dances to learn to dance from a very young age) (Goldberg, 2012).

Similarly, Jaurena lived his youth in a Tango-filled environment with a Tanguero father:

“En mi juventud el tango era una de las músicas más escuchadas en el Río de la Plata y además mi padre fue bandoneonista y gran tanguero.” (In my youth, the Tango was one of the musics most listened to in the Rio de la Plata and also my father was a bandoneón player and a great Tango musician) (Jaurena, 2012).

Yet again, the father appears to be a significant force in César Salgán’s career: His father, Horacio Salgán, the master Tango-pianist, wrote the self-published instruction book Curso de Tango (Course of Tango) “...la influencia mayor la he tenido de mi padre.” (...the biggest influence I’ve had is from my father) (Salgán, 2012). César has discussed this in another interview with father and son in 2002:

No estudié directamente con mi padre. Pero no hubo un día que hayamos pasado juntos en el que él no se haya sentado al piano, y cada vez fue una lección para mí, por más que simplemente me estuviera mostrando una pieza o un arreglo. Así es como yo estudio desde hace años y años con él. Sin que él lo sepa. (I did not study directly with my father. However, there wasn’t a day that we spent together in which we hadn’t sat at the piano, and each time it was a like a lesson for me, even if it was simply showing a piece or an arrangement. This is
how I studied for years and years with him without him knowing it) (http://edant.clarin.com 29/12 2002).

As a child, Octavio Brunetti remembers going crazy listening to his sister Laura, playing the piano. Moreover, he describes his excitement listening to Cambalache by Discépolo for the first time “. . . fue un impacto escuchar el tango – Cambalache. Me fui corriendo hasta el piano y lo empecé a tocar inmediatamente.” (. . . the biggest impact was hearing the tango – Cambalache. I ran to the piano and started playing it immediately). Brunetti, at the young age of seven, loved that rhythm, it was very special. “Yo tendría siete años y me encantó ese ritmo, fue algo especial.” (Brunetti, 2012). This Tango can be heard on You-tube ‘Tango Cambalache cantado por Julio Sosa’.

In my own musical life, piano study was encouraged by my father and his mother who were both pianists. As a young child I spent the holidays studying the piano and playing duets with my teacher-grandmother every day. She was my mentor throughout my thirty years of Classical piano playing.

The Tangueros were all influenced considerably by the strength of family. During their youth Jaurena, Golberg, and Salgán had a strong paternal influence and Brunetti gained inspiration to play piano from his sibling. Along with my own family history of musical encouragement there appears a collective experience showing that family interactions in music are a solid precedent for identifying as a musician.
The Influence of the Great Masters

The music of the great masters in Tango played a substantial role in the musical expertise of the Tangueros. Jaurena, Goldberg and Brunetti have been strongly inspired by the pianist/composer Osvaldo Pugliese who developed a dramatic and rhythmically challenging style of arrangement.

A description of Pugliese’s style follows:

Pugliese was becoming the most faithful example of the De Caro-style [classical rubato phrasing], but with a strong rhythmic beat, very appealing to the dancers but without sacrificing quality. [Furthermore,] . . . in the 40s Pugliese recorded some instrumental pieces of his own which anticipated the avant-garde. Such is the case of "La yumba" (which became a sort of anthem of his orchestra), "Negracha" and "Malandraca". Because of these two latter, he is regarded as a pioneer in the use of syncopation and counterpoint prior to Horacio Salgán and Astor Piazzolla (todotango.com).

Pugliese’s style is well pronounced in the contemporary ensemble Color Tango led by bandoneonist Roberto Álvarez, with Analía Goldberg at the piano. However, in addition, Goldberg has mentioned maestros of Romantic music, Frédéric Chopin and Sergei Prokovief having greatly influenced her along with Astor Piazzolla, the composer-bandoneonist of the Nuevo (new) Tango. Cellist Yo Yo Ma describes Piazzolla’s music as “. . . endlessly passionate – full of yearning – and at the same time tremendously contemporary” (Collier, Azzi, 2000, p.ix).
In contrast, Jaurena emphasizes that the traditionalists have inspired his manner of playing. They include bandoneonist Aníbal Troilo, “a master of personality and feeling in his expression” (todotango.com), D’Arienzo, “happy, fast, and pianistic, it was an ongoing experiment in intensity” (Thompson, 2006 p.187) and Horacio Salgán, who “was to push the development of tango music even further ahead in his eagerness not simply to renew traditional tangos but to create new ones” (Collier, Azzi, Cooper & Martin, 1995 p. 157).

In addition to his father, Horacio, César Salgán also includes Troilo as an influence, along with singer Carlos Gardel, the leading figure of the canción (Tango song), pianist/composer Francisco De Caro and his brother, violinist/composer Julio De Caro.

[Julio] De Caro maintained the essence of the tango originated in the slums [outskirt suburbs], brave and playful as in the beginnings, but blending it with a sentimental and melancholic expressivity unknown up to then, so reconciling the folk root with the pro-European influence (todotango.com).

Brunetti mentions Piazzolla along with Troilo as his greatest inspirers. However, he is the only Tanguero to include Carlos Di Sarli as a master of influence. Di Sarli’s style has been described as elegant, with magisterial restraint, economy, and “… an interpretive paradigm of danceable tango” (totango.com).
My major influences align with Brunetti’s, namely Di Sarli, Piazzolla and Pugliese. I found Di Sarli’s pianistic focus to be attractive and refreshingly different from the other great masters. It has been stated that:

... Di Sarli drew an entirely different sound from his own superb band, emphasizing melody without sacrificing rhythm. In his orchestra the piano prevailed, and his own left hand was prominent (Collier, Azzi, Cooper & Martin, 1995 p.149).

Looking back, my interest in Tango was originally sparked more than a decade ago by the music of Astor Piazzolla, as performed by Yo Yo Ma on the album—The Soul of Tango (Ma, 1997). Piazzolla’s music unlocked a new avenue of emotion expressed in music. He is quoted as saying: “I’m going to make tango music as I feel it” (Collier, Azzi, 2000, p.57). After years of studying piano of western art-music Piazzolla’s Tango-expression was, for me, a natural transition from Romantic piano music. In recent years the rhythmic arrangement style of Pugliese’s music has become an engaging inspiration.

It is important to note that each Tanguero has mentioned several masters of influence and, therefore, may take qualities of each into their own style. In the next section I will refer to these qualities.
Styles of Playing

The selected musicians are essentially interpreters of Tango music. Their styles are culturally connected to the traditions of Tango. Therefore, the Tangueros may emulate those traditional qualities within their own creative approach.

Jaurena describes his style as having traditional roots and believes Tango is “inside of him” rather than resulting from his studies at the Conservatory. He describes his style as “… un estilo que viene de lo tradicional y sin perder estas raíces se convierte en una música posiblemente más actual y con la apertura a la improvisación sobre armonías de tango y ritmo de tango.” (… a style that comes from tradition, but without losing these traditional roots, it transforms into a music with the possibility of being current and open to improvisation on harmonies and rhythms of tango) (Jaurena, 2012).

Salgán considers his compositions employ the same Tango language as his father (Horacio). He plays other genres including Jazz, Bossa Nova, Spanish Music, and Tropical Music. However, due to having strong cultural connections he believes that “… con el tiempo se fue acentuando mi identificación con el Tango.” (… over time my identification with Tango has increased) (Salgán, 2012).

Salgán feels it is very premature to talk about style. However, he has other aims: “Respecto a la forma de ejecución, solo trato que se a lo más claro . . . y que la música sea quien tenga
prioridad, y no uno como intérprete” (With respect to the embodiment, I just try to be as clear as possible . . . and [let] the music have priority, and not oneself as the performer) (Salgán, 2012).

On the other hand, Goldberg and Brunetti, the younger generation, appear to be interested and involved in the evolution of the Tango. Brunetti sums up his style like this: “. . . puedo encontrar las raíces tango, mi amor por el folklore, el respeto por la música clásica y la admiración por el jazz . . . ” ( . . . [the listener] can find in the roots [of my music] the Tango, my love for folklore, my respect for classical music and my admiration for jazz . . . ) (Brunetti, 2012). He plays Brazilian, jazz, folk and salsa yet his primary engagement is with Classical and Tango music.

Goldberg is passionate about writing popular Tango-songs. She states: “Sin embargo, en esta nueva etapa estoy escribiendo temas cantados y estoy estudiando la forma popular de la canción. Me gustaría hacer una nueva canción tanguera.” (In this new stage, I’m writing songs and studying popular song form. I would like to create a new form of Tango-song) (Goldberg, 2012).

As a female musician, I am encouraged by the endeavours of Goldberg. Her creativity will contribute to the continuity of female-presentation in the genre. In the past Tango music has been a male-dominated genre. In the 1930s musicians in all female bands such as Orquesta
típica La Porteñita, were never given the opportunity to be recorded. However, women singers, cancionistas, were recognized: for example, recordings by the famous Mercedes Simone (1904-1990) greatly contributed to the Tango canción (song). She was a versatile singer that was “... able to convey a range of tango moods” (Collier, Azzi, Cooper & Martin, 1995 p.140).

Goldberg naturally identifies with Pugliese both philosophically and musically. Pugliese was admired as a lifelong political activist and, according to Piazzolla, “the only bandleader that renews himself and has quality” (Collier, Azzi, 2000, p.163). Pugliese’s influence is evident in Goldberg’s playing style. She describes her style as “... muy rítmico, la melodía debe surfear sobre la ola y dejarse llevar por el ritmo. Es un contrapunto entre el ritmo y la melodía constante” (. . . very rhythmic, the melody should surf on the wave and go with the rhythm. It is a constant counterpoint between rhythm and melody) (Goldberg, 2012).

In regards to my own Tango-playing style: I have a natural tendency to express Tango-rubato; a keen sense of Tango-rhythms; and I have aspirations to compose original Tango-inspired music for solo piano. Regrettably, I am a late-comer to Tango and, as I am an Anglo-Dutch Australian and not South American, my direct cultural connections to Tango do not exist. However, it is for these reasons I am compelled to research Tango thoroughly.
Tango in Instrumental Ensembles

The respondents contributed their ideas about the requirements of a successful Tango-ensemble. The most significant aspects are: a) to have good arrangements that “. . . tenga una unión y coordinación musical” (have unity and musical coordination) (Jaurena, 2012); b) the ability for members to relate well to each other; and c) to express freedom in Tango as a unified group.

Golberg stresses that each player must know their function, they must listen to each other, and they need to co-operate otherwise it “es muy difícil, diría casi imposible hacer música” (it would be very difficult, I’d say it’d be impossible to make music) (Goldberg, 2012).

Brunetti and Salgán have both commented on the freedom of Tango-expression particularly found in small ensembles as opposed to larger orchestras. Salgán suggests that his duo of guitar and piano, “brinda ciertos momentos de mayor control y manejo de la expresión en ése instante” (allows for the increased control and management of the expression in the moment). He goes on to say that although some Tangos may seem to the listener to not have a fixed pulse the players are “siempre moviéndose sobre cosas establecida” (always moving on things established [a solid foundation]). However, it doesn’t sound mechanical and “da la hermosa sensación de que uno está tocando la pieza . . . casi por primera vez” (gives the beautiful feeling that one is playing the piece almost for the first time) (Salgán, 2012).
Brunetti prefers to play with his duo and trio. He describes “freedom” as: “... la respiración de cada integrante se vuelve la propia respiración, cada nota, cada silencio, es una meditación tanguera” (. . . the breath of each member becomes the very breath, every note, every silence, is a tango meditation) (Brunetti, 2012).

The Tangueros perform in a range of ensembles from solo, duo, trio to larger formations of quintet and orchestra each having its own charm. Salgán sums up the differences: “La Orquesta, un colorido y una grandiosidad. . . El Quinteto, permite quizás, más juegos. . . y el Dúo, tiene esa cosa intimista. . .” (The orchestra is colourful and grandiose . . . The Quintet, perhaps allows more games . . . and the Duo has that intimate thing . . .) (Salgán, 2012).

At this early stage of performing in Tango ensembles I have experienced some of the aforementioned settings, having performed in two quartets and two duo formations. I have found that well-constructed and clearly written arrangements certainly encourage the process of a musical union in the ensemble and save much time in rehearsal. Following on, the selection of musicians for an ensemble needs careful consideration so they can relate well to each other and successfully communicate with each other to express the Tango language.

In regards to ensemble formations, my first experience of playing Tango was in Australia in a traditional quartet lead by visiting Argentinean bandoneonist, Joaquin Amenabar. This ensemble was initially constrained and lacked a musical unity. However, by the third or fourth
performance, the group began to listen more attentively and consequently began to grasp Tango expression. I have found the duos to be more intimate with more freedom to express Tango and improvise than was attainable in quartets. However, in both the piano duo and the piano-clarinet duo, extensive rehearsals were necessary due to the demands involved in playing complex music in such a small setting.

I have experienced some success in arranging music and performing with a recently formed ensemble, Elegancia Tango Quartet. The quartet consists of piano, double bass, clarinet, viola, with the combination of latter two instruments attempting a semblance of the sonority of the bandoneón. The elements discussed previously are incorporated in this ensemble: effective arrangements and good relations between musicians with an average outcome of a unified freedom of Tango-expression in performance. (The last element will mature given time and experience, I expect).

Song, Dance, and Philosophy

The philosophy of Tango is best expressed in the poetry of the lyrics of Tango song. Lyrics that were written from the 1920s for the voice of the famous Carlos Gardel who, interpreting Pascual Contursi’s lyrics for Mi noche triste (My Sorrowful Night), transformed Tango. Collier describes the lyrics of Contursi as having brought “depth and sophistication” to the music (Collier, Azzi, Cooper, Martin 1995, p.64). An English translation follows:
My Sorrowful Night - lyrics by Pascual Contursi

Woman who left me
in the prime of my life,
wounding my soul
and driving thorns into my heart. . .
nothing can console me now,
so I’m drowning my sorrows
to try to forget your love. . .

My understanding of how to interpret Tango on piano grew exponentially by learning to
dance Tango, and reading Tango-lyrics; which express the emotions of melancholy, reflection
and nostalgia of the porteño (inhabitants of Buenos Aires). Therefore, I included a question
to the Tangueros to find out the relevance of these aspects in their music making.

Jaurena’s opinion is that all areas are equal “ya que cada uno de ellos identifica al tango”
(since each identifies the tango) (Jaurena, 2012). On the other hand, Salgán admires dance
and poetry found in Tango yet states: “a la hora de componer, por lo general es la música la
que manda” (at the time of composing, usually the music is in charge) (Salgán, 2012).

Goldberg composes Tango-music for dance and also writes Tango-lyrics. She firmly believes
that “la danza y la literatura son partes fundamentales del tango” (dance and literature are
fundamental parts of Tango) (Goldberg, 2012). Moreover, Brunetti describes how each discipline interacts with the other to create Tango. “... *llegada la hora de la creación musical todos estos elementos alternan un rol diferente y que se complementan perfectamente, ya que el tango no es solo música sino un género que involucra cada una de estas artes.*” (... when it comes down to musical creation all these elements alternate different roles and complement each other perfectly, because the Tango is not just music but a genre that involves each of these arts). In particular, Brunetti explains how Tango-poetry inspires Tango-musicians to express the music that is related to life situations which, in turn, influences how the musicians will “*a seguir su respiración,*” (follow the breath of the singer) (Brunetti, 2012). My personal interpretation of the ‘breath’ can be explained as both the physical breath and the metaphorical breath of the holistic understanding of Tango.

To expand upon this holistic view, international producer of Tango stage shows, Alfredo Minetti describes how Tango can be experienced on a metaphysical level. He describes Tango as representing:

“... a very particular way to see and approach the world. Music, lyrics, and dance are perhaps but the epiphenomena of this worldview and its correspondent ethos. In other words, it is very easy to explain how the music and the rhythms go, or what the lyrics say, or even what the most common dance steps are, but that says necessarily nothing if there’s a lack of deeper understanding of the Tango universe; it only makes it sound like a very exotic cultural curio” Minetti (personal communication, October 5, 2011).
The Survival of Tango as a Cultural Form:

The Tangueros have much to say about the evolution and survival of Tango as a cultural form. However, I would like to discuss the most relevant aspects that have resonated within my constantly evolving Tango-life. Brunetti introduces the topic:

\[ \text{La vida de hoy en día, el ritmo de la ciudad, las relaciones que se establecen entre las personas, son diferentes a las de años atrás, el género también debe reflejar eso en su presente. El interés de las nuevas generaciones por el tango que respetan el legado de las generaciones anteriores es lo que logra preservar al tango como una forma cultural.} \]

(The life of today, the pace of the city, the relationships established between people, are different from those of years ago, the genre also should reflect that in the present. The interest of the younger generation of tango that respect the legacy of previous generations is how we can preserve tango as a cultural form. (Brunetti, 2012).

So the ensuing question is: In what ways could Tango evolve? In the past Tango evolved dramatically thanks to Astor Piazzolla’s contribution. He composed “Tres minutos con la realidad” (Three Minutes with Reality) after listening to Béla Bartòk’s second violin concerto. The blend of Hungarian folk and European art music was a perfect inspiration for the creation of new Tango. Thompson describes the influence of Bartòk on Piazzolla:

“...Bartòk distinguished two ways in which composers could respond to folk music: they could quote tunes, or they could examine the elements of those tunes – modes,
melodic patterns, meters, manners of ornamentation – and create anew in similar style. [Piazzolla chose the second way]” (Thompson 2005, p.209).

Goldberg believes: “que la incorporación de la tecnología al tango es lo que se viene en el futuro” (the incorporation of technology into tango is what is coming in the future) (Goldberg, 2012). She predicts that instruments will assume an electronic status, an example being the accomplishments of the musical group based in Paris, the Gotan Project that incorporates an electronic bandoneón and synthesizers. Furthermore, Brunetti views Tango’s evolution as a cultural form is primarily through the “. . . creación de los nuevos compositores, letristas, son la llave fundamental para una continua evolución” (creation of new composers [and] lyricists, [who] are the fundamental key for continued development . . .) (Brunetti, 2012).

A further question is: How valuable is Tango and is it worthy of survival? Sálgan thinks it is impossible for Tango not to survive. He supports this statement by saying: “. . . un género que fue tan discutido y rechazado. . . solo con observar que las grandes Orquestas Sinfónicas del Mundo, están tocando Tango. . . sin duda, muestra la valía que posee”.

(...a genre that was much discussed and rejected only to find that the great symphonic orchestras around the world are playing Tango [and this] certainly shows the value it has.) (Salgán, 2012).
Jaurena emphasises that Tango is worthy of survival “. . . porque es un a música auténtica; porque nació de una sociedad” (. . . because it is an authentic music; because it was born in a society) (Jaurena, 2012).

Chapter Summary
The reaching out, meeting and engaging with these musicians has proven that, by sharing ideas as a collective of Tango practitioners, the nuances of the Tango music genre can be manifested, revealed and investigated. Subtleties uncovered in many areas have prompted some clear and profound understanding of Tango in my performance and arrangement practice. Important subtleties that directly impact on my understanding are as follows: The wealth of personal experiences from the family environment; the music’s integration into dance and society; the sense of retaining knowledge that is passed down through the masters; the distinctive-ness of different ensembles; the character of the stories presented in lyrics, the alternating emphasis on lyricism and rhythmic precision; and finally, a conviction that core elements of the genre will persist, yet many other aspects will develop further, and change.

This survey has established a sense of belonging to a community of Tango musicians. Seeking reassurance or commonality of experience with fellow Tangueros has stimulated advancement in my quest for knowing Tango.
Chapter 4: Developing Skills to Play Tango

Preludio

This chapter presents a reflection on my personal development of playing Tango on the piano. I will focus on the subjects of Tango phrasing; playing technique of distinctive features; the influence of Tango metaphors and lyrics; and the “feeling” in Tango dance. In addition, comparisons with other genres, Romantic period music; and Jazz-swing contribute to my argument and provide a deeper exploration of the unique manner of playing Tango on piano.

My teacher, Dr. Alfredo Minetti, expressed that to express Tango tangibly in piano playing the pianist must possess a deep understanding of the essential elements that coalesce to create the music. “The embodiment of Tango is both rational and emotional” (Minetti, personal communication, November 11th 2011). The rational starting point is to express knowledge of: the distinctive technical and stylistic features; the wide gamut of expression; precise articulations; and, the Tango-phrasing style. However, to apply these elements in an effective way, it is necessary to develop a specific playing technique. Moreover, to embody a certain quality of emotion and Tango-attitude is requisite to confidently communicate the underlying feelings in Tango through the music. In his discussion about the interconnection of music, metaphor and metaphysics, Kramer states:

... if music, this [Chopin] or any other, is thus capable of conveying such depths of feeling and complexity of attitude, through form and technique but independent of their authority the fact surely deserves to be recognized (Kramer, 2004 p.3).
Delivery of phrases

The delivery of spoken phrases in Spanish, as spoken in the Rioplatense region, correlates to the delivery of melodic phrases in Tango-canción (song), a peculiar style of rubato. The emotionally charged lyrics of songs with their metaphors and meanings determine the manner of delivery. The artists that were at the forefront of Tango phrasing were Carlos Gardel, and Aníbal Troilo. The renowned vocalist, Gardel, had a distinct way of phrasing the melody referred to as decir (to say, or to utter). Decir, sometimes written on the score as fraseado or fraseo (phrasing, to phrase) can be described as a distinctive style of rubato (touched upon in Perceptions of Paradigms in Pianism). The speaking and singing parallel can be distinguished in Gardel’s performance of *El día que me quieras* (The day that you will love me) (todotango.com) where he alternates talking and singing passages throughout the song.

To grasp the manner of delivery of decir it was necessary to dedicate much time to actively listening; observing mannerisms; and analyzing the phrasing of a variety of Tango-singers including: Roberto “Polaco” Goyeneche, Julio Sosa, Carlos Lombardi, and, of course, Carlos Gardel. Subsequently, I studied the phrasing, with particular attention to the physical gestures, of Tango-pianists especially Jose “Pepe” Colangelo, who was the last pianist of the famous orchestra of Troilo. In addition, I listened intensely to the bandoneón-phrasing in recordings of Troilo in a duo with guitarist Roberto Grela (Troilo, 1962). The following section outlines a salient personal experience of learning how to make Tango-phrasing tangible.
Initially, during my studies in Buenos Aires in July 2010, I acquired the original published score for piano solo of the Tango, *A Don Agustín Bardi* (To Mr. Agustín Bardi) a reverence to a famous early Tango musician, along with the recording of the composer, Horacio Salgán performing in a duo arrangement with guitarist, Ubaldo de Lío (*Legendes du Tango*, 1988). In addition, Minetti, provided a copy of his expanded arrangement for piano solo and a video of his interpretation on piano.

An understanding of possible expressions in phrasing was achieved through transcription. I began by learning Minetti’s arrangement. Following on, I transcribed Salgán’s improvisation and then my own recorded improvisation of the first four bars in the second section of *A Don Agustín Bardi*. The examples below show the various possibilities of “groupings” which sound like a string of spoken words that, depending on speed, compression or expansion, can be interpreted as affected by emotions such as anger, complaining, longing, pain, love or remembrance.

Figure 14.

A copy taken from of the original piano score – *A Don Agustín Bardi* (Salgán, 2000).
Figure 15.


The above example demonstrates one way of delivering the phrases of *A Don Agustín Bardi*. Note the interpretation of a sextuplet in bar one and the mordent in bar two. The four groupings express flowing spoken phrases that, in my opinion, represent the emotion of remembrance.

Figure 16.


The second example exhibits my transcription from a 1988 recording of the composer/pianist Salgán. This demonstrates cross bar-line syncopation occurring across bars one to two; a complexity of triplet sixteenth-notes combined with thirty-second-notes; and accented
syncopation. There is an extra grouping in bar two, making five condensed groupings that, again in my opinion, express an utterance of complaining.

Figure 17.

This transcription of my own recorded interpretation demonstrates condensation of ideas from both artists. Minetti’s idea consists of four flowing groupings and the sextuplet phrasing that occurs in bars one, two and three. Cross bar-line syncopation occurs across bars two to three and again across bars three to four.

All three variations exploit the motivic construction of the original phrase outlined by the pitch groups E-D, E-D, D-C, D-C, C-B, C-B, through expansion, elimination, blending and compression of motifs. Although grouped in four segments, Minetti’s inclusion of mordents produce the effect of minute interruptions in the utterance, as if stumbling over speaking the words in the rush of emotions. Salgán’s line also presents this effect by the clumping of neighbouring tones under the main outlining pitches. My phrasing presents a more homogeneous rhythm and less minute separations, granting the phrase a sense of gentleness and smoothness. The rushing-forward phrasing expresses love and longing being similar to the manner of Tango-vocalists like Carlos Gardel or Roberto “Polaco” Goyeneche.
Although not written in the above examples, the chords in my left hand remain in steady time under the spoken melodic phrasing. This specific technique required hours of diligent practice to separate the timing-quality of each hand: Right hand improvised-rubato and left hand steady-time. In the case of Salgán, the guitarist, De Lío, was keeping a steady rhythmic accompaniment.

The transcription exercise revealed the diversity of phrasing within the confines of Tango. The three performance examples of the phrasing vary quite radically from the printed score and each other, and this intense study has encouraged my own personal interpretation of phrasing as a Tango musician.

Tango: Piano Technique and Physiology

A secure grasp of the technique of playing Tango is essential for effectively interpreting and communicating emotion and attitude. While studying piano in Buenos Aires with Facundo Bericat I was introduced to Gyorgy Sander’s piano method. In his book “On Piano Playing, Motion, Sound and Expression,” Sander states:

> Interpretation and technique are indivisible . . . emotions are expressed by motions [and furthermore)] . . . the role of the performer is to recreate the music (and the emotions that inspired its creator) in a manner that generates similar moods in the listener . . . the important link in this chain is technique . . . (Sander, 1981 p.1).
We began by addressing my pedalling. Every change of chord had to be pedalled for clarity of sound, more exacting than in my experience of classical pedalling. The pedal is not depressed and held as it would be in a phrase of Chopin. It is lifted and replaced more often throughout the phrase giving a sense of legato-accentuation. Following on we focused on finger work in fast passages in order to gain more dexterity and rhythmic definition. Mastery of pedalling and finger work was a prerequisite for the next area of learning, that of expressing Tango-rubato phrasing. Bericat would demonstrate the phrasing repeatedly and perform the Tangos in their entirety. I remember asking him how he phrased so beautifully and he simply replied “I spoke!” Bericat appeared to simulate the manner of speaking by coordinating very precise pedalling with finger work.

The most challenging experience was to express the physiology of Sander’s method. An example of this was learning to play a descending glissando preceded by a two sixteenth-note pick-up. Bericat describes the technique of the glissando: “Play lightly with the flexible thumb . . . the torso muscles are used to make the movements . . . the forearm is floating over . . . you can suspend your whole arm from the underarm with your torso and shoulder muscles. Don’t twist your forearm.” (Facundo Bericat, personal communication, June 30th, 2010).

The technique of playing marcado en cuatro, (presented in Perceptions of Paradigms in Pianism), is the foundation of the Tango accompaniment style for the pianist. My experience of learning marcado en cuatro began in a lesson with Joaquin Amenábar. The example below
is typical of the distinctive technical feature: a walking bass in the left hand and triadic movement spanning two octaves in the right hand.

Figure 18.

marcado en cuatro with walking bass and triadic movement

(Extract of accompaniment – 9 de Julio, arr. Elton)

Firstly, the Tango-walking bass in my left hand was recorded. Listening back I could hear the uneven-ness of accentuation. The left hand has an attack but I needed to remain relaxed. Amenábar explains: “This [technique] is microscopic-al . . . it is important that you hear the difference . . . don’t think of the movement, think of what you hear” (Amenábar, personal communication, August 4th 2011).

My right hand chords were recorded separately and were found to be uneven as well. Amenábar explained that the “chord is a unit” and it must be “concise and powerful”. I was repeatedly told that my biggest problem was a stiff wrist. By focusing on both listening and feeling the action I discovered that the desired effect was possible. Amenábar stated: “Listen to what is good and what is not good, [the latter being] a flat sound” (Amenábar, personal...
communication, August 4th 2011). In addition, Amenábar emphasized the importance of studying the physical technique first and then the phrasing, both in separate hands then together.

In my own mind executing *marcado en cuatro* was achieved by: a quick curved right arm sideways movement so the fingers can arrive and be in position on the surface of the destination-keys; performing a “digging” action with the fingers at the moment of contact with the keys; “springing off” from the keys with a very loose wrist; and lastly, listening and feeling the accentuation of the left hand walking bass.

I was assisted by Dr. Alfredo Minetti to learn how to deliver the most distinctive technical feature of Tango, the *arrastre*, in an aesthetic stylistic manner. The *arrastrar* meaning “to drag,” discussed in the *Perceptions of Paradigms in Pianism*, is a stylistic device preceding a downbeat. The length can be slightly different: a single note, a chromatic run or whole palm glissando. The indication on the music is often only a line, rather than rhythmic notation, leaving the interpretation to the performer. To drag effectively one must take into consideration what the *arrastre* is leading to. If the *arrastre* prepares a síncopa, (syncopation) it is shorter while in a *marcado en cuartro* (marked in four) it is longer. The learning strategy was most effective with video footage on you-tube and interactive lessons using Skype with Minetti. He emphasized “Good performers really drag it, *lo arrastran*, and that gives you the *feel* that the pulse, beat, is being delayed . . . so, a good Tango
musician never rushes an *arrastre*, on the other hand, you have to start feeling comfortable with the (apparent) delay . . .” (Minetti, personal communication 29/8/2011).

My first task was to recognize the various *arrastres* by tracking a video and writing down the seconds of every single *arrastre* heard. Following on, Minetti demonstrated on his piano in New York (over Skype) and, in turn, I played for his scrutiny on my piano in Australia. Several lessons later I began to make sense of the actions involved.

Whilst in Buenos Aires I took lessons on the *bandoneón* with Amenábar. Learning to play the *arrastre* on *bandoneón* helped to understand the essential sonority and vitality required. The activity established the feeling of connection between sound and movement: of air rushing through the reeds that was felt in my torso and the muscular movements in my arms that initiate the accents. Amenábar correlates the “feeling” of phrasing on piano to that of the action of the *bandoneón*. The sound produced by pulling-out – *abre* (to open) the *bandoneón* is reproduced by the “laying of weight” on the piano in an “increasing way” which produces a different sound (Amenábar, personal communication, August 4th 2011).

After a time I consolidated my skills in playing the distinctive features of *Tango-rubato, glissando, marcado en cuatro, and arrastre*. However, I still felt limited in being able to play with the range of expression and clarity of the great pianists I had listened to.

It was suggested I take lessons with Dr. Therese Milanovic on the “Taubman Approach”. This teaching method works well with players that have pain and injury, or difficulties with small hands. However, I was not in any of these categories therefore the problems were readily
solved in just a few months of training. Dr. Milanovic presented an overview of her teaching strategy for my particular needs. She described a “physical re-positioning” (my words). Milanovic states:

My main focus with you [Cécile] was getting you more connected to the instrument. Your basic position was leaning back, with a low wrist, which meant that the weight was being directed into the wrist rather than the playing finger(s). Also, your tendency was not to adjust the torso as you moved to various registers of the piano, the forearm also needed to be more consistently behind the playing hand. When these corrections were in place, you were able to start controlling the sound, and feeling that ease that begins to occur when the fingers, hand, forearm and torso are aligned. From there with that greater control over the key descent, we could start to explore and deepen your tonal palette. Another key area was looking at fingering to remove stretching, which creates tension and limits speed, and to create a sensation of smoothness and ease of playing. The progress in a short time was remarkable (Milanovic, personal communication, 14/11/13).

Emotions and Tango

I personally resonate with the deep inward feelings and drama of the highly emotional art form of Tango. The Tango-emotion was made clearer by investigating the meanings of the Tango-lyrics and Tango-metaphors. Emotions of reflection, melancholy, and nostalgia are represented in the meanings of lyrics in *Tango-canción* (Tango song). My project supervisor, Argentinean composer, Dr. Gerardo Diríé, discussed this uniqueness: “If something was not told in the lyrics of a tango, either it didn’t exist or it was false” (Dirié, personal communication, April 4th 2011).

In the publication – *The Tango Metaphor* – Nielson and Mariotto state: “By the 1930’s Tango lyricists were writing songs of protest, and many tango musicians use this medium to declare
their support for political ideologies” (Nielson and Mariotto, 2006 p.14). *Lunfardo,* “the local slang of Buenos Aires” (Love, 2009), was used to disguise lyrics so that only the lower class could understand them. Horacio Ferrer expresses metaphor in the lyrics of *Mi Gordo Triste* – “My Sad Fat Man” – (below) as a reverence to the famous band leader and *bandoneonist,* Aníbal Troilo who was revered for his courage and support for Tango during the military dictatorships.

Figure 19.

My Sad Fat Man

From which *lunfardo* Shakespeare

has this man escaped

who has seen in a match

the growing storm;

who walks straight

on bended music stands,

who organizes public square parties

for dogs without a moon? (Nielson and Mariotto, 2006 p.15).

Troilo wrote *Responso* (a prayer for the dead) in 1951 as a dedication and homage to the famous lyricist Homero Manzi. People express a variety of attitudes when this music is played.

Minetti explains:

I actually know people who refuse to dance to this tango [*Responso*] as a sign of deep respect . . . others who don't care . . . others yet that say that the dance can embody any kind of human sentiment, and that there is no bigger sign of respect than to dance with Manzi, Troilo and the meaning of the music in mind [however] . . . the only
occasion you do not dance in Tango is when Gardel is singing, that my grandma (who was a wonderful dancer) taught me and I follow to this day . . . (Minetti, personal communication, September 1st 2011).

The emotions of powerfully expressed human relationships was experienced at a live performance when I visited Buenos Aires. The lyrics of the Tango *La mariposa* (The Butterfly) were recited in Spanish by a very large transvestite seated on a chair under a spotlight on a dark stage. It was a moving experience to see the emotions of love, anger and despair expressed in an intense corporeal manner. It resonated with my own life experience. The lyrics are to follow in an English translation by Alberto Paz.

Figure 20.

*La mariposa* – The Butterfly (1920) by Celedonio Flores

It's not that I'm regretful of having loved you so much, what upsets me is your oblivion and your betrayal plunges me into bitter weeping; if you could see, I'm so sad that I sing to avoid crying; if you left for your own sake, for your own sake I must forgive you!

The afternoon when I saw you I liked your appearance, babe of the suburbs, and not knowing why I followed you and I gave you my heart and it was only for my misfortune. Look how sincere was my love that I never imagined the bitterness of your betrayal, that I was left alone and sad without love and faith and a beaten heart.

After sucking, betrayer, from the rosebush of my love, you leave unfaithful looking the spell of another flower; and looking for the purest one, the one with the prettiest colour, you blind it with your beauty to later deceive it with your love. Be careful, butterfly, of the deeply felt loves, don't get blind by the glow of some false passion, because then you'll pay for all your wickedness, for all your betrayal (www.planet-tango.com).
The metaphors of Flores’ lyrics are typical of the 1920’s Tango themes of sexual attraction, love and life in Buenos Aires. Lyrics that followed were retrospective of that era although with a twist. Bloom describes this phenomena concerning prominent lyricist, Discépolo: “He [Discépolo] “misprisions” [violates] him, willfully misinterprets him, [Flores] achieving a rueful innovation” (Hamilton, 2005 p.36).

The accumulation of knowledge of metaphors and meanings of song lyrics position my thoughts on how I can express the music with a Tango-attitude. My developing taste in Tango encourages piano performances to be more charged with energy to tell a story be it of passion or bitterness, remembrance or nostalgia or whatever engages me at that time.

Feeling in Tango dance
Firstly, the embodiment of a Tango-attitude is required to dance Tango. Reflecting on past sadness is renowned in the porteño world for being cathartic. The metaphor of the aforementioned poet Discépolo articulates this feeling: “Tango is a sad feeling that you can dance to” (Nielson and Mariotto, 2006 p.19). Moreover, to the massive population of lower-class immigrants of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Tango was a kind of intense ritual that brought solace to their subservient lives. The article entitled – The Tango Metaphor – discusses the historical feeling of individual freedom within external controls. “The earliest dancers found in Tango a means of free expression that was blocked in almost every aspect of their lives” (Nielson and Mariotto, 2006 p.18).
It is important to clarify the notion of “Tango dancing”, that I refer to, as one of the habitual milongueros and not to be confused with the Tango specifically for exhibition or typical of ballroom dancing. Variants of the latter Tango appear in movies like “Mr and Mrs Smith” or Schwarzenegger’s dancing to Por una Cabeza in “True Lies”.

Although some Tangos are only for listening, originally the Tango was created for dancing. Therefore, dance-ability was at the forefront of Tango music. My fascination with Tango music inevitably led me to dancing (mentioned in the prelude) and so began an exploration of the mutual relationship. Pianist, Pablo Ziegler describes Tango as dance: “The shape of the tango is made up of moments: a swift sudden entrance, a sweep of the feet, an advance, a retreat, a halt and a start, a displacement of hips, and a freeze, as if hanging in the air . . .” (Thompson, 2005 p.219).

Knowing how to dance Tango creates a tangible opportunity to capture the feelings that enhances expression as a Tango-musician. In addition, dancing Tango clarifies the features of the music-dance connection: The peculiar rubato timing and certain distinctive musical features that relate to dance-steps. The Tango-rubato takes on a new dimension when moving the body in accordance with it. The leader, generally the man, may improvise to the rubato melody or he may dance to the underlying groove of the music, or often, an alternation of both. The follower, generally the woman, needs to be totally aware of the various leads from her partner to respond effectively.
The woman often has opportunities to be creative and decorate with *adornos* (adornments) around the led steps and during the pauses. The man also decorates between steps. Similarly, pianistic-adornments include grace notes, *efectos de campana* (bell effects), and *octavados* (octaves with grace notes).

A prevalent decorative feature of *glissando* can be felt in the dance movement called the *boleo*, from *bolear* – to throw. As the knees of the follower are kept together a slow or fast movement is led resulting in a high or low whipping action of the lower leg describing a circle behind.

The most fundamental dance movement in the Tango is *caminar* – to walk. It has been said by many of my teachers that if you can’t walk the Tango walk, you can’t dance Tango. The motion of the feet when walking in Tango is quintessentially the *arrastre* (drag) technique in playing piano: the most pertinent and distinctive feature of Tango. *Caminada* (walking) involves the initial movement of the leader’s body so that it is balanced over the forward foot requiring the leader to lead with his chest. The follower responds by walking backwards with a push off the ball of her landing-foot and extending her free leg behind. The combined motion of the Tango-couple creates a subtle resistance at the beginning and acceleration to the end of the step, each dancer alternatively yielding to the other.

My personal experience of both dancing Tango and playing Tango on piano is that of reciprocity. Both artistic pursuits complement each other and contribute to a comprehensive
feeling of embodiment. The feeling I possess is one of indulging-meditation on the music; a meta-physical connection with the other dancer or instrumentalist; and no doubt a subliminal understanding of the holistic meaning of Tango.

Comparisons to other genres

In my experience, playing Romantic period music or, alternatively, swinging hard bop requires a particular mind-body feeling. Yet playing Tango, especially that of the musicians: Pugliese, Di Sarli, Salgán, and Piazzolla demand a much greater involvement of attitude and emotion that changes more frequently over the course of the Tango.

To gain a clearer perspective of the contrasting genres I drew some comparisons of aspects of piano music in Argentinean Tango with Romantic period music and Jazz swing-feel in a 1950’s jazz quartet. The following tables are the summarized results of my understanding:

<table>
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<th>Figure 21.</th>
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<tr>
<td>ROMANTIC PERIOD MUSIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cantabile singing-style <em>rubato</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stretching/contracting note durations and some accentuation without altering the melodic-notation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Intensity of dynamic expression that is written on the score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No improvisation of duration and pitch</td>
</tr>
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</table>
ARGENTINEAN TANGO

1. Emotion-filled speech-like rubato
2. Rhythmic diversity of syncopation and stronger, more edgy accentuation reflecting the emotion of the spoken phrase with alterations to the melodic notation. Melodic rubato over an unaltered steady accompaniment
3. Extremes of intensity in dynamic expression, often more than what is written on the score
4. Improvisation of melody, rhythm and harmonies. Idiomatic improvisation of special effects (yeites) including slapping the sides and knocking on wood

JAZZ SWING-FEEL

1. Melodic emphasis is on the rhythm by playing behind or on the beat
2. Rhythmic focus on syncopation; moderate random accentuation; and altering or re-creating the melodic line
3. Moderate dynamic expression
4. Prolific improvisation of melody, rhythm and accompaniment

The rhythm of the accompaniment is unaltered and the tempo remains constant
Tributary to the Tango: The Co-presence of Milonga

As a Tango performer it is important to consider another significant tradition of Argentinean music that runs parallel with Tango, the milonga. In my performing experience milongas contribute to around one third of a program for Tango concerts or dances. Therefore, a sagacious Tango-pianist would possess a substantial collection of milongas in their repertoire.

The milonga was historically a precursor to the Tango, but has always been a salient co-presence. Thompson explains the importance of milonga: “Buenos Aires and Montevideo honor the importance of tango’s co-presence [the milonga] by calling the place where people dance tango a milonga and calling devoted [Tango] dancers milongueros” (Thompson, 2005 p.148). With lyrics concerning competitions and conversations milongas can be fast and spirited characterized a double time habanera-feel: Two-four time (dotted eighth-note, sixteenth-note, eighth-note, eighth-note). The spirited urban milonga accompaniment style is demonstrated in the piano accompaniment below.

Figure 24.

*Milonga*, piano accompaniment, bars 13-18

(Payadora-Plaza, arr. C.Elton)

Alternatively, the music can be slower as in the milonga campera (rural milonga) representing the bordoneo groove, a style of guitar playing adapted to the piano (an example was given in the chapter – *Perception of Paradigms of Pianism*).
Chapter Summary

At this point of my research I was well equipped with more effective skills of playing Tango on the piano. I was conscious of the dance-music connection; in possession of a greater depth of feeling by understanding Tango metaphor and attitude; and, as a result, able to express Tango with more confidence. I am fine tuning the perception and refining the distinctive stylistic and technical features in performance. The way is now paved for a more creative application of Tango knowledge: To develop the artistry of original arrangements and compositions. The following two chapters, in conjunction with scores and recordings in the portfolio, will demonstrate the new knowledge.
Chapter 5. Tango Arrangement

In this chapter I will initially present concepts of what defines an arranger and an arrangement followed by reflections on how I arranged four Tangos: one arrangement for piano duo and three arrangements for quartet, the latter being a formation inclusive of clarinet, viola, piano and contrabass. The arrangements analysed, represent a style of music indicative of the Tango musician’s repertoire: Tango in 4/4 for piano duo; Tango in 4/4 for quartet; a milonga in 2/4 for quartet; and a Tango vals in 3/4 for quartet. The resources – Curso de Tango by Salgán and Metodo Progressivo de Piano Tango by De Elía and Trepiana – assisted with the creation of arrangements.

The complete scores and recordings of the collection can be found in the portfolio along with two additional arrangements. The examiner may wish to view the accompanying score from the portfolio whilst scrutinising the arrangement analysis.

It is important to define the qualities of a successful arranger of music in general. Ron Gorow’s book – Hearing and Writing Music – proposes the following definitions: An arranger can be described as one who “tailors music for a specific artist or occasion, setting the style, form and key” (Gorow, 2002, p.384). Furthermore, it is essential to know precisely what making an arrangement means. Brinkman concisely defines it as “the adaptation of a piece of music so as to make it suitable for performance by media other than those for which it was originally; or, a simplified version of a work for the same...
medium of performance.” (http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/brinkman). Wriggle goes into more depth:

The creator of a musical arrangement, which typically comprises decisions of instrumentation, chord voicing, formal routine (the placement of verses, interludes, modulations, etc.), or genre characteristics (bluegrass, mambo, punk, etc.) applied to a composition for performance (www.oxfordmusiconline.com).

Frank Tirro describes an event where Miles Davis offers reverence to arrangers that was unknown at the time. He quotes Gil Evans: “I remember . . . that original Miles band during the two weeks we played at the Royal Roost. There was a sign outside – “Arrangements by Gerry Mulligan, Gil Evans, and John Lewis.” Miles had it put in front; no one before had ever done that, given credit that way to arrangers” (Tirro, 2009 p. 69).

The three-step arrangement process for each of the Tangos is: firstly, to define the arrangement process; secondly, present excerpts of distinctive stylistic and technical features from the score; and thirdly, to clarify the analysis in a table. The first Tango arrangement – Bahia Blanca – includes an expanded discussion about the particular style of the composer, Carlos Di Sarli, (mentioned earlier in Perception of Paradigms in Pianism).

Below is a table of arrangements in order of appearance in the discussion. The first arrangement is for piano duo and the following are arranged for quartet.
Carlos Di Sarli – *Bahía Blanca* – Tango Piano Duo

I was curious to arrange music by Di Sarli due to his remarkably different stylistic features of Tango. Hence, an expanded discussion of the composer’s particular style (touched upon in earlier chapters) will precede this particular analysis.

Carlos Di Sarli, (1903 -1960) *El Señor del Tango* (The Lord of Tango) also known as *La Mufa*, (The Jinx) and *El Innombrable* (The un-nameable) is a pianist, leader and composer of Tango in the 1940’s. He was highly respected by fellow musicians. Collier states: “A French journalist once mentioned Di Sarli to Astor Piazzolla and he said “shut up!” while quickly crossing his fingers and touching wood” (Collier, 2000 p.162).This is a common reaction when someone mentions the name of a person believed to be a jinx. The term *La Mufa* gives some insight into Di Sarli’s unique style. Minetti describes *Mufa* as “... a self-induced stated of depression
in which one takes a lot of pleasure in indulging.” (A. Minetti, personal communication, October 11, 2011). The above insight could explain why Di Sarli’s piano playing in the orchestra had an aura of solitude, of being separated from the other musicians. Di Sarli’s initial experience in Tango was as a pianist in the smooth aristocratic orchestra of Osvaldo Fresedo. He formed his own orchestra in 1928 where he created his own style.

The process of arranging Bahía Blanca was fostered by experiencing Di Sarli’s music performed live in 2009 by the Orquesta del Tango de Buenos Aires (Orchestra of Tango of Buenos Aires). Furthermore, I performed a quartet version with the New Australian Tango Quartet arranged and directed by bandoneonist, Joaquin Amenábar, in four concerts which included the Brisbane Tango Festival in 2011. Recordings of various Tango arrangements, notably Carlos Di Sarli y su Orquesta Típica, ( . . . and his typical orchestra) with the composer conducting from the piano, assisted in understanding the overall style, particularly, Tango-rubato contrasting with passages of strict time.

The embodiment process took place of aurally connecting with the notes; tonal range; rhythmic peculiarities; orchestration; instrumental qualities; expression; articulation; and in particular, the stylistic characteristics. The melodies, counter melodies and bass lines emerged as singable. The acquisition of the score of the original composition for piano with simple melodies and harmonies presented some useful ideas about the original concept of the Tango.
The reason for the ensemble choice of piano duo was to focus on discovering more about the tonal palette for piano and how to capture the essence of *Bahía Blanca* in this setting. The search for a second pianist to perform the work with me was particularly difficult. Several declined due to the unfamiliarity of playing Tango and limited time to devote to understanding the style of another genre. In addition, the second pianist required certain attributes which included a reliable technique, and a willingness to understand how to phrase Tango. The Classical and Jazz pianist, James Ball, was engaged for the project. The Tango – *Bahía Blanca* – was performed, along with two other Tango-arrangements by Pablo Ziegler, as part of the Australian Piano Duo Festival in Brisbane – “Emerging Artists” in 2012 (the program and recording can be found in the portfolio). The initial inspiration for the piano duo was captured by sketching a plan describing the first phrase for Piano I and Piano II.

**Figure 26.**

**Sketch plan, 1st phrase – *Bahía Blanca***

Piano I: Two-handed chords and melody in both hands.

Piano II: Bass-line in double octaves on beats 1 and 3, two-handed chords on beats 2 and 4.
Following on, the parts were type-set using Sibelius software, listened to, and adjustments were made. The sketching initiated the process of arranging but did not need to continue. Once the sections, and melodies were put down, the decisions were made in regards to texture. Each piano part was given an equal share of melodic lines and accompaniment and, at moments of greater tension, the piano parts were written in unison.

Technical and stylistic features were carefully included. Instrumental colour and characteristics were taken into consideration when arranging for Piano Duo including qualities of the bandoneón, (harmonic 2nds campanas); violins, (sweeping melodic rubato-phrasing) and contrabass (driving bass lines) and yet the pianistic setting was thoughtfully considered. The constant playing of the arrangement on the piano was a requirement to enhance the progress of checking, gaining inspiration and spurring creativity of expression.

The following features particular to Di Sarli’s music include enlace (linkage), bordoneo (melodic embellishment) and elegant accompaniment styles. These features became a stylistic “trademark” of the musician “. . . stressing delicate, elegant rhythm especially for dancing” (todotango.com).

The following examples are taken from the piano parts of arrangement of Bahía Blanca for piano duo and demonstrate the enlace feature. This stylistic feature for the piano created a rhythmic drive that gave Di Sarli’s music its powerful identity. The enlace feature is a melodic leading-phrase, that extends the rhythmic momentum to connect to the next phrase, usually
strengthened by the appropriate harmonic support. At the end of the first phrase in bar 4, an imperfect cadence (i-V), presents *enlace* and, at the end of the second phrase in bar 8, it appears again as a perfect cadence (V-i). The inverted mordents add impetus to the rhythm.

Figure 27.

Enlace, Imperfect cadence, i – V bar 4       Perfect cadence, V-i bar 8

![Musical notation]

( *Bahía Blanca* arrangement by – C.Elton)

Di Sarli’s piano style has a signature embellishment of the melody known as the “Di Sarli bordoneo”. This is in contrast to the bordoneo rhythmic decoration of a harmonic progression derived from the guitar style: a three-three-two (3-3-2) rhythmic pattern implied in the bass line with the right hand eighth-notes filling in-between (as referred to in *Perception of Paradigms in Pianism*). According to Minetti the “Di Sarli bordoneo” can occur as a motif repetition over three or four octaves, as displayed in the first example below, or as a sextuplet chromatic fill between two melody notes in the second example (Minetti, personal communication, October 30, 2011).
Figure 28.

Di Sarli bordoneo – motif repetition, bar 10

![Figure 28](image)

Figure 29.

Di Sarli bordoneo – sextuplet chromatic fill, bars 26-27

![Figure 29](image)

*(Bahía Blanca arrangement by – C.Elton)*

Below is an explanatory table to accompany the score (included in the portfolio) and will assist with the location and identification of the distinctive stylistic features.

Figure 30.

Table of Features - *Bahía Blanca*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Piano</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enlace</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Tonic in bass moves to an accented-suspended #4th degree on the “and” of beat 1. The melodic line is an octave apart. The sixteenth notes circle the 6th degree which is preceded by appoggiaturas in the treble. The progression is an imperfect cadence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enlace</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>The dominant chord is implied in the melodic line two octaves apart that is preceded by appoggiaturas. The melodic line leads to the tonic which is also preceded by appoggiaturas in right hand. The progression is a perfect cadence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bordoneo</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>The <strong>bordoneo</strong> motif repeats of three octaves and embellishes the arpeggio of F# minor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motif</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bordoneo</strong></td>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>I and II</td>
<td>The <strong>bordoneo</strong> sextuplet occurs in both pianos in unison. It commences on the 3rd beat embellishing the melody with the sextuplet moving chromatically to the triplet. The chord progression is IV-V an imperfect cadence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aníbal Troilo – *Responso*

Tango Quartet – clarinet, viola, piano and contrabass

After my Tango-arrangement debut I was encouraged to explore the arrangement process further, making the project of arranging for piano duo a catalyst for the quartet arrangements. It was a challenge to arrange for a quartet that included an unusual selection of instrumentation, that of clarinet, viola, piano and contrabass. A higher level of thought was necessary to be creative with tonal combinations, sonority, balance and idiomatic features for an ensemble of these instruments.

The first arrangement for Tango quartet was inspired by a solo piano piece, *Responso*, arranged by Alfredo Minetti, composed by the famous *bandoneón* player and composer Aníbal Troilo. *Responso* is an intense Tango of reverence. My strategy to arrange *Responso* involved developing my playing technique to a point where I was able to express the nostalgic and reverent aspects inherent in Minetti’s solo piano arrangement. As a consequence, I could hear how the solo version could be expanded to a quartet arrangement and further enhance the intensity of the Tango.

It was imperative to suggest potential phrasing to enable the players, who were not familiar with Tango phrasing, to gain a sense of how to “say – decir” Tango-rubato. As previously mentioned in *Developing Skills to Play Tango*, the score in traditional Tango music did not provide the manner of phrasing. The Spanish word *fraseo* or *fraseado*, (to phrase or phrasing) was often written to indicate this performance practice. Following, are phrases from a passage where I have written out the phrasing possibilities.
Piano announces the initial *fraseado*, bar 19 left hand

![fraseado notation](image1)

Clarinet reiterates the phrase, bar 20

![fraseado notation](image2)

Viola speaks aggressively, bar 21

![fraseado notation](image3)

The initial phrase is followed by the same phrase reinvented by each instrument. The piano initiates the phrase using acciaccaturas to dotted eighth-notes. The clarinet reiterates with thirty second-notes as a turn with accents. Viola speaks the phrase again, with more aggressive phrasing including accentuation before and after the triplet followed by two thirty second-notes in bar 21. (Note: all musical examples are in concert pitch from a non-transposing score).
The piano and contrabass play a critical role in creating drama by the use of *arrastres* (literally to drag). The diagonal line before the first beat of the bar indicates the pianist has a choice of approaching the first beat of the bar with one or more ascending appoggiaturas.

**Figure 34.**

*Arrastre* diagonal line, bar 22

However, the approach is more likely to blend better as two chromatic ascending notes, as seen in the example for contrabass.

**Figure 35.**

*Arrastre*

Two note chromatic approach, bar 22

Arranging music that includes strings and wind instruments provided an opportunity to experiment with a particular expressive use of “off-beat accentuation”. Drago describes the action as an “inward-outward” motion on strings (Drago, 2008 p.66). The bar below demonstrates, in the clarinet and viola, the distinctive combination of an accent slurring to a staccato with a small crescendo to the “on-beat” occurring in rapid succession.
Figure 36.

Off-beat accentuation, bar 22

The right hand of the piano doubles the melodies of clarinet and viola with accented eighth-note chords. Although the piano is expressively confined to the hammer hitting the string only once for each off-beat the combination of instruments provide a dramatic rhythmic effect overall.

As discussed in chapter two, the melodic line is often extended to both hands. In the B section the piano solo has extended melodic lines two and three octaves apart. This feature is employed as a descending dynamic fill in-between phrases of the melody (as seen in the second
and fourth bars below). The melodic treatment adds an intensity characteristic of the drama of a piano concerto demonstrating the interplay of orchestra and piano. I have maintained the melodic strategy, originally found in Minneti’s solo piano arrangement, and enhanced the intensity by adding fortissimo pizzicato accompaniment with the strings (viewed in the 3rd bar of the excerpt).

Figure 37.

Intensity of melodic extension, bars 36-39

Acciaccaturas play an important role in creating intensity in Responso. A full-chord acciaccatura adds dynamism to the main chord as seen in bar 6 below. A single acciaccatura to an octave, shown in the bass at bar 45, can create a sudden dramatic effect. In the last example, bar 50, acciaccaturas precede each of two quarter-note chords that occur on the “off-beat” – a driving force to a climax.

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The variación, a variation on the theme or cadenza, can occur in the final section of a Tango. It commences with the solo instrument, often the bandoneón, and the orchestra joins in expanding the beat to be marked in four, marcado en cuatro. Figure 41 exhibits the first bar of the four-bar piano solo, and figure 42 shows the same phrase with all instruments of the quartet demonstrating the application of marcado en cuatro.

Figure 39.

Variación, bar 51
The last stylistic feature of *Yumba arrastre* (discussed in previous chapters) drives the music to a dramatic finish. The simultaneous action of the contrabass doubling the piano left hand *arrastre* (palm-glissando) creates an intensity towards a forte-fortissimo climax. The *yumba* is best described as: accents on beats one and three, no accents on beats two and four that are played on the lowest note (or cluster) of the piano keyboard. The *arrastre* indicated by a diagonal line from the lowest note or cluster of notes from beats 2 to 3 and from 4 to 1. The overall effect can be experienced by observing the video recording found in the portfolio.
Figure 41.

_Yumba arrastre_ bars 68-70
Figure 42. An explanatory table follows to outline the distinctive features of *Responso*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Fraseado</em></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>The phrase of a dotted rhythm, preceded by acciaccaturas, is first played in the bass on piano and echoed in consequent bars by the clarinet and piano in the treble in unison with viola. This offers the possibility of each player ‘saying’ the phase with their own personal expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Arrastre</em></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>A line indicates there is a choice of <em>arrastre</em> for the left hand. The feature could be played like the contrabass, a two eighth-note approach or, for a dramatic sound, a four eighth-note approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Off-beat accentuation</em></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>Repeated accents occur on every off-beat in the bar in the treble of the clarinet, viola and piano. The melodic line is intensified by the addition of accented four-note chords in the piano right hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Extended melodic lines</em></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Typical melodic line feature of double octaves in the right hand and single line in the left hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Acciaccaturas** | 6 | The chordal *acciaccatura* played at fortissimo creates intensity in the high point of the piano introduction.  

The double *acciaccatura* squeezed in to a bass harmonic octave whole note creates drama in this less dense section.  

The chordal *acciaccatura* occurs on the offbeat in the treble with bass octaves on the beat creating tension leading towards the *variación* (cadenza). |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Variación y marcado en cuatro** | 51-60 | The piano is featured with a sixteenth-note running melodic line over the chord progression.  

At bar 57 this theme is taken over by clarinet and viola playing in unison. The piano is playing *marcado en cuatro* underneath. |
| **Yumba arrastre** | 68-69 | Piano left hand and contrabass play *yumba arrastres* in unison to create tension that builds up to a forte fortissimo climax. |
Julián Plaza – *Payadora*

Tango Quartet – clarinet, viola, piano and contrabass

The idea behind arranging *Payadora* was to emulate the story-telling style of the *milonga* (fast, spirited and conversational). In keeping with the style I have given the instruments a pseudo character to impersonate the singers in *milonga* while also alluding to the theme of *Payadora* (“to payar”) a form of contest of lyrical improvisation. The full-score, found in the portfolio, can be viewed simultaneously with the following discourse.

The introduction, in a major key, commences with a brief solo from the enthusiastic piano welcoming the other instruments. They open the discussion singing in unison. The viola takes the stand and begins to tell her “complaining” story in a minor key phrasing her words to gain attention by dragging and accelerating.

Figure 43.

Viola complaining, drag-accel, bars 11 and 12

However, she is interrupted by the voracious voice of the clarinet who articulates her side of the story in a syncopated manner with sharp attacks emphasising her words. The clarinet disbelieves viola’s story and deems it to be biased.
Figure 44.


Clarinet ends with a scream of disgust with an ascending *glissando*. However, the enthusiastic piano attempts another more plausible version of the viola’s story, while the viola and clarinet interject with short counter phrases in the manner of “aha!” at the end of each piano phrase.

Figure 45.

Short counter phrases –“aha!” bars 30-32

The story is expanded by all four participants in a heated discussion with answer phrases or counter-arguments in piano’s left hand and contrabass. The episode ends with a sigh of defeat from the clarinet (descending *glissando*)!
Counter-arguments, bars 35 and 36.

Next, the enthusiastic piano and cheeky contrabass steal the limelight. The pair introduce a major key in a rhythmic interlude of a bordoneo groove (guitar-feature) with satirical banter building up to another instalment.

Bordoneo groove in contrabass, bars 41-44

The piano right hand explodes with an ascending glissando into a new conversation. In the next section clarinet, viola and piano are driven by the rhythmic feature of pelotita (the accelerated rhythm simulating a ping-pong ball as it bounces).
Figure 48.

*Bordoneo* groove in piano, *glissando*, leading to *pelotita*, piano, bars 47-50

![Bordoneo Groove in Piano](image)

(An enlarged view)

Reverting to a minor key, clarinet, viola and piano challenge each other in unison, the intensity heightened by four-note tenuto-chords in the piano right hand. An undercurrent of a lively rhythmic drive is kept up in the contrabass and piano left hand. Following on is a passage where the piano consoles the clarinet’s point of view by playing in unison in a syncopated and repetitive manner softly whining away quietly.

Figure 49.

Clarinet, piano syncopated, unison, bars 61-64

![Clarinet and Piano Syncopated Unison](image)

Finally the clarinet and viola resolve their differences in a duo.
However, the entire conversation is repeated with yet more debating from the viola and clarinet. Towards the end, the introduction is reiterated and continues into an unpretentious epilogue. A few cheeky remarks are made in a sudden key change by the piano and contrabass with mischievous knocking and slapping on wood. The music returns, in an instant, to the original key.
Figure 51.

Yeites, slapping, knocking, piano and contrabass, bars 79-80

The piano finishes as enthusiastically as she began and the rest of the participants join in with a final flourish. They end the feisty contest with a small but satisfied sigh on the final chord.

Figure 52.

Table of features - Payadora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fraseado</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>I have used the words “drag/accel” to indicate how to “say” the phrases in the opening bars of the main theme. The phrasing is originally introduced by the viola at bar 11. The melody in the right hand of the piano phrases in groups of sixteenth-notes 1234, 123,123 repeatedly in an eight bar section. The second phrase crosses over the bar line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mordents</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mordents occur repeatedly over 8 bars on the fourth eighth-note in every second bar of the principal melody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Glissando</strong></td>
<td>3, 47</td>
<td><em>Glissandos</em> are indicated by a diagonal line and are used here to introduce a new phrase or as at bar 47, a new section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pelotita</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>The stylistic rhythmic feature of <em>pelotita</em> is indicated on the score to ensure all three instruments executing the phrase accelerate in the same way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off-beat leaping chords</strong></td>
<td>13-18</td>
<td>The right hand plays a distinctive chord accompaniment on the “and” of one and the “and” of two, leaping to a distance of two octaves apart. The left hand keeps an underlying <em>milonga</em> feel of dotted eighth-note, sixteenth-note, eighth-note, eighth-note.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bordoneo</strong></td>
<td>41-48</td>
<td>The bass string guitar feature of a dotted eighth-note followed by an accented sixteenth-note tied to an eighth-note followed by another eighth-note is doubled in the contrabass an octave below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off-beat accentuation</strong></td>
<td>57-64</td>
<td>The passage of off-beat accentuation presents an accented chord on the dominant 7th#9. It is played on the “and” of beat 1 in the right hand of the piano in bar 59 and again in bar 63.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yeites</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Idiomatic effects can be added at the performer’s discretion. However, I have indicated the rhythm on the score for piano and contrabass. The rhythm can be produced by slapping the side of the instrument or knocking on wood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rosita Melo - *Desde el Alma - vals criollo*

Tango Quartet – clarinet, viola, piano and contrabass

Transcription: Minetti, Arranger: Cécile Elton

The final arrangement of this chapter is *Desde el Alma* - From the Soul, a Tango-vals. I undertook to systematically re-work an arrangement of Pugliese’s that was transcribed by Minetti for piano, guitar, violin and contrabass. To create a new arrangement of this vals, for the line-up of clarinet, viola, piano and contrabass, I chose to incorporate much of the guitar music into the piano part and the violin music was shared by the clarinet and viola. To maintain the integrity of the vals I needed to ensure that the lyrical melodies and counter-melodies were phrased in the Tango manner. *Fraseado* (phrasing) or *fraseo* (to phrase) are written on the score several times throughout and can occur even when not written on the score at the player’s discretion. This discussion is predominately about *fraseado*, an astute feature that is lyrically well-pronounced in the Tango vals style.

At the very beginning the piano invites us in with a beautiful introductory *fraseado* in the left hand. The opening melody commences in the right hand with an F# double octave and is preceded by an *acciaccatura* to add more emphasis and significance. The *acciaccatura* can approach the melody note from above, as shown in figure 53 or from below, in figure 54.
Figure 53:

*Acciaccatura* preceding melody note from above, in bar 3.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 54:

*Acciaccatura* preceding melody note from below, in bar 10

![Musical notation](image)

It is expected that the following sixteen bars of the melody will continue to be phrased in a similar *Tango-rubato* manner. However, a piano counter-melody, interchanging with the main melody played by the clarinet and viola, can continue the *fraseado* as seen in bars 27-34.
The viola and piano play a counter-melody an octave apart leading into section C. in bars 50-51. The connecting phrase, bar 50-51, labelled *fraseo* presents, an articulation of eight-notes phrased: 123,12,12, with the last note, the dotted half-note becoming the down beat of the next bar in the new section. The unusual phrasing typifies Tango that I often realized in Piazzolla’s music.

**Figure 56:**

Countermelody, 123,12,12 phrasing, viola and piano doubling, bars 50-51.
At bar 60-62 a surprising counter-melody *fraseo* is initiated in the left hand on piano, a most unusual and striking feature of Tango, of which I decided to mark forte-crescendo-fortissimo to enhance its poignancy.

Figure 57:

Counter melody *fraseo* in piano left hand, bars 60-62

Below is an example of *octavados* decoration, the feature of ascending two octaves, (discussed earlier). This piano accompaniment style with *octavados* is prolific in Tango music and is very suited to the *vals* style by way of adding lightness of rapid rhythm that encourages the momentum in three-time. The interest in the rhythm of the octaves is maintained by varying the entry point of each eighth note in the treble: bar 100 on the second beat, and bar 101 on the “and” of the first beat. This is then repeated.
Figure 58:

*Octavados* decorative feature, piano accompaniment, bars 100-103

![Octavados decorative feature](image)

Figure 59:

Table of Features - *Desde el Alma*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fraseado</td>
<td>3-17</td>
<td>Piano introduces the lyrical theme of 16 bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraseo</td>
<td>27-34</td>
<td>Counter melody piano in right hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>Counter melody in left hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acciaccaturas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Preceding melody note of <em>fraseo</em> from above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Preceding melody note of fraseo from below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tango</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Phrasing presents an articulation of 123,12,12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>articulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octavados</td>
<td>100-103</td>
<td><em>Eighth-notes</em> decorative feature of ascending two octaves as an accompaniment supporting melodic phrases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the process of arranging Tango requires some specific strategies. Firstly, there is a need to understand what is involved in being an arranger to create a particular approach for each arrangement. Secondly, the research of scores and recordings give some authority to the arrangement. Thirdly, exploration of the inner workings of the distinctive features and styles can inspire creativity in the arrangement process.

The creativity involved in the arrangement process has demonstrated my perception of Tango by showcasing the distinctive features in the context of the various Tango-styles. However, the pinnacle of creativity is the realization of original composition presented in the ensuing chapter.

The reader will note: In the accompanying portfolio, two additional arrangements, Taquito militar - a fast milonga, and Milonga del adiós - a slow contemporary milonga, can be inspected.
Chapter 6. Creation of Original Tango

The Process - Tango, amor y dolor

My lengthy liaison with this unique genre promoted an intense freedom to transpire. I felt liberated after several years from exposure to and practice of Tango. In this final discussion I will describe how I faced the personal challenge of composing a suite of four Tangos titled – *Tango, amor y dolor* – for solo piano.

The process involved to create new Tango music was initiated by improvisation at the piano and inspired poetic ideas. I captured the musical and poetic impressions while fresh in my mind in the interest of maintaining a compositional “wholeness”. The ideas were gathered and then made manifest in scored compositions and poems. I recorded and listened critically to my performances multiple times. I received feedback from specialist musicians and dancers to give some objectivity to the early sketches. Consequently, the compositions were adjusted, elaborated, modified or expanded.

Performing the music and amending the work post-performance was paramount to generate a dependable final product. The first performance is live in a public setting and can be viewed on the video recording in the portfolio. This footage can be compared to the revised version: the second rendition performed in a recording studio.
The initiation of the poetry *accomplice* began early in the project when I needed to capture ideas in words to inspire the reciprocating emotion in the music. I chose to deliver the story in my familiar native language, rather than in Spanish, to make it more realistic to my life. However, I have provided Spanish titles to, in some way, honour the legacy of Tango. The poetic preludes unconsciously divulge an identifiable Tango-narrative. This constitutes for me an expressive account of deep and moving emotions.

Figure 60.

_Tango, amor y dolor* – Tango, love and sorrow

_El camino en soledad* – The path alone

I am lost in the forest of alone-ness

Only the beat of my heart reminds me that I am not dead

The forest is dark and daunting

The path ahead is murky fearful

On this spot I stand immovable

I barely exist . . . abandoned bewildered

¡Qué encuentro! – The thrilling encounter!

A small guiding light radiates alluring blue eyes

A captivating smile . . . a tender low voice

I feel a strong hand grasp mine

My heart flutters, my breath quickens, my head feels fuzzy

In unison, we take small excited steps

Savouring sweet smiles of pleasure . . . and enchantment
**Recuerdo su perfume . . . y la noche** – I remember his scent . . . and the night

I remember . . .

The scent of rose petals, unfolding, fragrant
Lime green leaves glimmering under the moonlight
A whispering breeze sweet and fresh
Trees of willowy branches bowing in acceptance
The sky is filled with a thousand stars
Guided by one full-bodied moon
I cannot forget . . .
His scent, intoxicating, blissful
Our bodies swaying in a dance of acquiescence
As we . . . one combined soul, are perfumed by love

**Esa descarada** – That brazen woman

Flower petals shrivel and die, waft away
Trees become ugly gnarled grotesque
Stars hide in fear behind dense dark clouds
The moon greys and expires
I hang my head in despair
All is dark, joyless
As a frightened bird
He was not willing to be held . . . in my hand
Our love is ruined
He turned his face away . . .
Under the spell of a shame-less other
Metaphor and Embodiment

At the forefront steering this process was the engagement of metaphor and the totality of Tango-embodiment. In his book – *Embodied Cognition* – Shapiro describes how metaphors not only shed light on concepts but they may determine their meaning. He could be describing the foundation of embodiment in my Tango-journey.

Metaphor is a method for expanding understanding. Given that one already understands A, B, and C, one can use this knowledge to help in coming to understand some new concept or idea D. To do this, one must draw connections between A, B, and C, on the one hand, and D on the other (Shapiro, 2011 p.86).

In chapter three, Brunetti mentions how poetry inspires musicians to express the music that relates to life situations, and so it is for me. The metaphorical treatment of poetry reflects my personal embodiment of the music that may resemble the insightful character found in Tango-lyrics.

To identify embodiment of Tango in my person I must ascertain what I am thinking and feeling in my body while improvising; composing; and performing. Although not all of the concepts in Cumming’s book – *The Sonic Self* – are relevant in this dialogue the following citations reinforce my thoughts on attentiveness to emotions and physical sensations, suggesting a duality of feeling in the body and thought. Cumming states:

In order to hear anger in a voice, you need to notice raucousness, an edgy sound. To feel love in someone’s touch you have to attend, at least subliminally, to the gentle
pressure and motion of their hand in yours. To smell a fragrance as “refinement” . . . in response to a woman’s perfume, you need to take at least some pleasure in its effect on your discriminating nose (Cumming, 2000 p. 276).

When I crafted the original Tangos my senses were engaged by a thought or a feeling that was derived from an event in my life. Everything created had its foundation in personal experience. Analytical thought entered when I wanted to explore and develop the stylistic and technical features of Tango; solve a harmonic progression or melodic design problem; or to attend to a piano technique issue. More often than not, the compositions developed in a spontaneous manner and this organic growth unified ideas into complex wholes. The process was cathartic, similar to dancing Tango (explained in chapter four). I must add that the several half-composed Tangos, systematically composed without personal engagement, remain undeveloped.

Shapiro (2011 p.2) describes how embodied cognition “is better considered a research program than a well-defined theory”. This aspect of his writing resonates with my thoughts of the embodiment-journey of Tango. Simply put, there are two concepts of how one can learn: Through “direct physical experience” and a more complex concept of “engaging thought with metaphor” (my understanding of his words). In the discussion on conceptualization in Shapiro’s book, Lakoff and Johnson remark:

. . . metaphor pervades our normal conceptual system. Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in
experience . . . we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms . . . (Shapiro, 2011 p.87).

An example previously mentioned of “direct physical experience” is that of when I learned the technique of striking a series of chords with exactness or pedalling with a particular clarity. An example of my experience of “engaging thought with metaphor” is when I reflected on Discépolo’s statement: “Tango is a sad feeling that you can dance to” (mentioned in chapter four) as I was composing *El camino en soledad*.

The aforementioned embodiment concepts: Attentiveness to emotions and physical sensations (Cumming, 2000), and holding metaphor in thought, in combination with direct physical experience (Shapiro, 2011), were the main sources of engagement in my investigation of Tango. Individually or collectively the embodiment concepts may be engaged in other genres of music however, that is beyond the scope of this study. From my perspective of personal experience playing Classical and Jazz music, some or all of the embodiment concepts exist to a lesser degree. By comparison though, the understanding, absorbing, and demonstrating the music of Tango requires an augmentation of all three concepts. On reflection, perhaps such augmentation occurs when a musician, already trained in a genre or practice, seeks to embark on engaging with a less familiar one – as it has been in my case.
Chapter Summary

To conclude, the compositional process is displayed in the table below. This delineates how I met the challenge of composing original and introspective Tangos for solo piano. Embodiment and metaphor pervades all three stages.

Figure 61.

Composition process:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improvisation: creative thought that is a response to inner hearing and inspiration from life experience mediated by the metaphorical relatedness of music and poetry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Composition: the capturing of ideas much dependent on a fluent application of technique and knowledge of relevant background producing an innovative whole engaging both creative and analytical thought.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Performance: the expressive balance of sensuality and rational control giving attentiveness to the moment where I am both listener and performer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

The way in which Tango is played is in contrast to how the published sheet music is notated. This is expressed in a personal reflection of Dr. Alfredo Minetti:

Although Tango is played from a written score, there are distinctive ways in which to improvise and interpret the music which has been, to a large extent, transmitted orally and aurally: through direct exposure and practice (A. Minetti, personal communication, September 4th, 2011).

In retrospect, the process of learning Tango brings about an awareness of similar conditions affecting the performance of any music. The Viennese Waltz is a modest example of how the score does not reflect the traditional performance practice of delaying the 1st beat in a bar of three quarter-note beats in the stylized rhythm of the music. Moreover, Jazz swing lead sheets may present a melody of Cole Porter, as it was composed in straight eighth-notes, yet the player defines the “swing” performance practice by delaying the first and third eighth-notes in a grouping of four, and emphasizes the second and fourth beats.

Within the confines of human experience printed music notation, in any genre, is not the music we perform. Fundamental aspects of expression are not described, therefore no written manifestation of music will give us the complete picture. In the canon of Classical music we have the resources available to bridge the gap in the core repertoire. Teachers can express how to perform the music and convey the different levels of meaning. However, this
is a challenge in Australia, when it comes to Tango, as we don’t have the resources due to the lack of available reference points for Tango as a musical practice.

I commenced this monologue armed with a broad palette of musical knowledge and experiences having a background that encompassed skills in Jazz and Classical piano. My expectation was that, by pursuing this doctoral research, I would to learn more about pianism in the Tango genre that, initially, seemed to be a formidable undertaking as an outsider to the culture.

The investigation required a perception of foundation knowledge including: Tango’s origins; the arrangement tradition; the distinctive technical and stylistic features; and the contributions of historically prominent Argentinean pianists. Following on, my research required the assistance of present day Tango musicians to gain specialist knowledge in the approaches to performance and innovations. The next stage was to develop my own skills as a Tango musician in a manner that was appropriate within the Tango communities in Australia. Through performance-led and auto-ethnographic research I progressed to the point where I could assimilate the knowledge and demonstrate my skills through arrangement, composition and performance of Tango.

It is vital for a music genre from a particular culture to have foreign scholars, like myself, to study and analyse the music not only to add creatively to the genre but to provide an alternative and subjective viewpoint for other foreigners to engage with. It is my sincere hope
that the theoretical and creative components of this project will become ubiquitous amongst pianists and composers to partake in the multicultural dynamism of the music world.

*Coda*

“This is How One Dances Tango (*Así Se Baila el Tango*)”

What do those classy, pretentious, high-brows know;
What do they know about tango, what do they know about rhythm.
Here is elegance. What a look! What a figure!
What a posture, what arrogance, what classy dancing!
This is how one mows the lawn while drawing the figure eight,
To make these filigrees I am like a painter.
Now a run, a turn, a “sitting down” figure;
This is how one dances tango . . . a tango worthy of me!

Lyrics by Elizardo Martínez Vilas (Savigliano, 1995 p.158)
Reference List


Music Score and Selected Discography


D’arienzo, J. (no date). *Sus primeros éxitos vol.2* [CD]. Buenos Aires, Argentina: RCA.

D’arienzo, J. (no date). *Tangos para el mundo vol.2* [CD]. Buenos Aires, Argentina: RCA.


TANGO ON TUESDAY!

You are invited to a unique performance of Argentinean Traditional Tango Music. Cécile Elton will be performing piano with ‘The New Australian Tango Quartet’ Tuesday 2nd August, 2011 at 7.30pm
Ian Hanger Recital Hall
Queensland Conservatorium

Joaquin Amenabar: bandoneón.
Nataly Ossa: violin.
Cécile Elton: piano
Andrew Shaw: double bass

PROGRAMME

1. El Pollo Ricardo – De Luis A. Fernandez
2. Bahia Blanca – Carlos di Sarli
3. Rosa de Otoño – G.D Barbieri
4. Milonga de mis amores – Pedro Laurenz
5. El Ingeniero – Carlos di Sarli
6. Shusheta – De Juan Carlos Cobian
7. El Esquinas – de Angel Villeldo, Carlos Pesce y A. Timarni
8. A la Gran Muñeca – Carlos di Sarli
9. La Cumparsita – Gerardo Matos Rodríguez
TANGOS FOR TWO PIANOS
Cecile Elton & James Ball
18 October 2011 8.00pm
Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University
Ian Hanger Recital Hall
Tangos for Two Pianos – Astor Piazzolla (Arr. by Pablo Zielger)

Pianists: Cecile Elton and James Ball

1. Libertango
2. Soledad
3. Fuga y Misterio
4. Milonga Del Angel
5. La Muerte Del Angel
6. Tangata

Cécile Elton is a well known Tanguera in the Brisbane and Sunshine Coast Tango communities for her musical contributions. She plays the piano across the genres of Jazz, Classical, and Tango and composes original music including Tango-Jazz fusion and contemporary classics for solo piano. Her first album 'Rosas para vos' was launched in 2009.

In 2010 Cécile studied piano and arranging for Tango in Buenos Aires. She is currently working on a 'Master of Music' research degree at the Queensland Conservatorium researching Tango music with a focus on “Pianism, and the Essence of Tango.” Her teacher, Alfredo Minetti, based in New York, is a pianist/arranger and producer of Tango-shows internationally. In August 2011 Cécile performed in the Brisbane Tango Festival with the New Australian Tango Quartet.

James Ball is a young pianist at the start of a promising career. As a jazz pianist, he has performed in a wide variety of ensembles, including the Enthusiastic Musicians’ Orchestra, the Quadratic Contingency, the Queensland Youth Orchestra Big Band and the Queensland Youth Symphony. Although currently in his first year of studying jazz piano at the Queensland Conservatorium, he retains a keen interest in many areas of music, including classical piano and clarinet, on which he holds an AMusA qualification.

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Leandro Christian/Mao Lee

Mozart: Sonata in D for 2 pianos, 2nd movement
Adam McMillan/Lachlan Dorsae

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Corey Sinclair/Tamami Nakano

Piazzolla arr. Ziegler Decarissimo
Di Sarli arr. Elton Bahia Blanca
Pablo Ziegler El Empredrado
Cecile Elton/ James Ball

Chris Haaley: Rhapsodie, for two pianos
Adam McMillan/William She

Lutoslawski: Variations on a theme of Paganini, for two pianos
Misaki Hori/Sam Mitchell
Admission Free

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Ziegler: Milongas del Adios
Plazzolla: Historia du Tango
Melo: Desde el Alma
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