

Piazzolla 100 years – part 4 Old Traditions Died Hard



Although he was gaining respect and popularity around the world, the artist was still not accepted in his native country. Returning to Buenos Aires in 1955, Piazzolla received death threats and mistreatment from tango extremists. At one point, a gun was pointed at his head by a disgruntled Argentinean who didn't appreciate his use of jazz and non-traditional instruments. Undaunted, Piazzolla returned to the United States, where he spent an unproductive three years. "Colleagues in the United States urged him to compromise by writing 'marketable' stuff, especially for the movie industry, but he resisted and finally withdrew," noted Caleb Bach in *Americas*.

One of his first pieces, *Sinfonia Buenos Aires*— which received a first place award in the international Fabien Sevitsky



Competition in Indianapolis—was met with boos and insults elsewhere. The people of Argentina were not yet ready for the sounds of the new tango.

After returning to Argentina, Piazzolla made his homeland breakthrough with *Tango-operita* in 1968. The folk opera was directly influenced by the works of George Gershwin, whom Piazzolla had admired for many years. Prior to this success, Piazzolla formed a new Quinteto Nuevo Tango that performed at his club, Jamaica. Many musicians, eager to work with the composer, often stopped by for a jam session.



Anibal Troilo's Orchestra

During the 1970s Piazzolla's music began to experience critical acclaim in his beloved Argentina. Early in the decade his hard work, extravagant lifestyle, jet setting and chain smoking gave Piazzolla a massive heart attack. The 54-year-old musician attempted to quiet his habits, but his resolutions lasted only a year before he was traveling around Europe, writing compositions feverishly. It was also during that decade Piazzolla's mentor, Anibal Troilo, of the Anibal Troilo Orchestra, died.