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Café de los Maestros

26 Jun 09 8pm

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Dance Nations

'The one thing that can solve all of our problems is dancing' James Brown

Dance Nations – part of this summer's brand new Blaze season – is a celebration of the sheer diversity and raw energy of the global music and dance scene, featuring dazzling exponents of the best-known dances – including tango, flamenco, swing, salsa, samba and jazz dancing - as well as balletic ambassadors for rhythms such as Afrobeat, funk, cha cha cha and Brazilian frevo.

This brand-new dance festival features a host of nations, from Brazil to Congo and from Argentina to Serbia – and, in the 50th year of its revolution, Cuba. The culture of the Island comes to London in the shape of charanga legends Orquesta Aragon – who rose to prominence during the 1950s cha-cha-cha boom – and Changui de Guantanamo, who perform changui rhythms on tres, marimbula & congos. At Hackney Empire, Orquesta Aragon will be joined by Yoruba Andabo, a company of singers, percussionists and dancers that performs original West African rumba, the group has its roots in musical get-togethers held by dockers in the Havana harbour in 1961.

From the Old World comes riotous, gypsy funk from Serbian trumpeter Boban Markovic and the Markovic Orchestra, arguably the greatest trumpet player to emerge from the Balkans, and his band have dominated the local scene for more than 15 years, winning numerous awards. Support comes from Macedonian jazz

guitarist Toni Kitanovski and his horn driven Cherkezi Orchestra, fusing Gypsy wedding brass with New Orleans funk, plus samba and African rhythms. Exploring the existential aspects of the Balkan beat will be a separate concert featuring Bosnian star Goran Bregovic and his Funeral & Weddings Orchestra.

Other highlights of the Dance Nations season include a performance by flamenco diva Carmen Linares, an old-school tango orchestra show featuring Cafe De Los Maestros, the veteran band from Buenos Aires, shows by Cuban nueva trova legend Pablo Milanés and salsa supremos Los Van Van, plus the first ever UK performance by Rome's biggest multi-cultural export Orchestra di Piazza Vittorio, a celebration of UK jazz dance featuring DJ Gilles Peterson & Snowboy, Afrobeat, funk and jazz from Brooklyn legends Antibalas – supported by Benin's Gangbe Brass Band – and a thrilling, frantic double bill starring Brazilian band Spok frevo, making their UK debut, and the Congo's Kasai Allstars.

Many concerts are open-air and venues include Victoria Park, Hackney Empire, Gillett Square in Dalston, Cargo, Shoreditch Park and of course the Barbican Hall.

Calling all movers and groovers– do you want to boogaloo like its 1962? Or just practice throwing some shapes for the evening performances. Then learn top tips at dance lessons hosted by experts. You can learn to salsa, rumba and tango from the pros at a series of workshops – see <http://www.barbican.org.uk/blaze> for details.

Programme note © Chris Moss



Café de los Maestros

Café de los Maestros

Oswaldo Requena piano
Fernando Suarez Paz violin
Horacio Cabárcos double bass
Miguel Angel Varvello bandoneón
Luis Antonio Stazo bandoneón
Hector Silva bandoneón
Juan José Mosalini bandoneón
Oswaldo Montes bandoneón
Anibal Arias guitar
Juan Carlos Godoy voice
Nina Miranda voice
Sebastien Couranjou violin
Cecile Bourcier violin
Anne Le Pape violin
Jerome Legrand violin
Tanya Schaap violin
Ludovic Michel violin
Sabine Balasse cello
Alejandra Gutty dancer
Claudio Hoffman dancer

'If, when you hear a tango that is played well, you don't feel your chest tremble, find something else to do with your time.'

Carlos García, pianist, Café de los Maestros 1914-2006

Café de los Maestros is not a band so much as a renaissance in miniature. A gathering together of the greatest tango singers and musicians – many of them in their 70s, 80s and even 90s – it is a blast from a bygone age, when the ballrooms of the world's capitals were swinging to a sexy new beat. It is, though, also an affirmation that tango is still very much alive and living in Buenos Aires.

A handsome double album, a stirring and thoughtful documentary film and now a series of live concerts, the spirit of this 'Café' has spread far beyond the corner café-bar where it was first dreamed up. Dozens of

creative talents have been involved in this audacious project, but the mind (he'd probably say 'heart') that set everything in motion in 2004 belongs to Argentinian musician and producer Gustavo Santaolalla.

'I always knew I'd do something serious with tango,' he says. 'This is it'.

Santaolalla's career began in 1967 at the age of 16, when he founded Arco Iris, one of the first Argentinian bands to explore a fusion of rock and Latin American folk rhythms. In the 1970s he played alongside another teen prodigy, pianist Alejandro Lerner, and in the 1980s he travelled the length of Argentina with folk/rock crossover legend León Gieco, recording indigenous rhythms for a four-album project called *De Ushuaia a La Quiaca*.

'Café de los Maestros is related to many things I've done in my career,' he says. 'Since I started making records, one of the conceptual bases of everything I've done is related to the concept of identity and knowing who you are and where you come from, and trying to express that.'

In 1978, with Argentina now under military dictatorship, Santaolalla left Buenos Aires for Los Angeles. Over two decades he continued to work with groundbreaking Latin American artists, including Molotov, Divididos, Julieta Venegas and Aníbal Kerpel, the latter becoming his co-producer in later projects. Over the period he has become one of the most influential producers in the Latin American music scene, winning a Grammy for his work with Café Tacuba and Oscars for his film scores for *Brokeback Mountain* and *Babel*. He has also worked with the Kronos Quartet and the acclaimed classical composer and fellow Argentinian Osvaldo Golijov and is

the oldest – but liveliest – member of Bajofondo Tango Club, who brought the house down at the Barbican in April 2008.

Where Bajofondo is very much a fusion, Café de los Maestros, he says, is an attempt to do 'something purer' with his country's most famous export. 'Tango was something I always had tremendous respect for,' he says. 'I grew up listening to tango at home; my father used to sing tango every morning. We listened to it at family gatherings, in the movies, on the radio. It was just part of our landscape.'

Café de los Maestros is Santaolalla's most ambitious project to date. Between the 1960s and 1980s, tango was far less popular than folk, rock or Latin dance rhythms and as the years rolled on many of the best-known tango legends died. When Astor Piazzolla died in 1992, tango might have died with him. But Café de los Maestros proves that there are still some major talents among us, and that there is a great appetite for classic, old-school tango in Argentina and abroad. The double CD that came out of the sessions won a Latin Grammy in 2006 (Santaolalla's ninth to date) and was acclaimed by veteran tangophiles for recapturing the sound of the old vinyl recordings. An eponymous documentary drew record audiences in Argentina. A gala concert in August 2006 in Buenos Aires' beautiful Colón Opera House was a sell-out and led to a live show in Lyon, Paris and a further five shows in Buenos Aires, and now this show at the Barbican.

Singers and musicians have come and gone, and there is a fluidity to the enterprise. There have been illnesses along the way and one of the key members, pianist Carlos García, died in 2006, aged 92. Café de los Maestros cannot last forever and any concert is a unique privilege.



Cafe de los Maestros

'This is the sort of project you can only do every 20 years,' admits Santaolalla. '[Café de los Maestros], which usually has about 15 members performing, is a big group of old people to be taking around the world'.

A record evolving into a film and then a series of concerts inevitably invites comparisons with Buena Vista Social Club, but Santaolalla points out many key differences. 'Buena Vista is a project I love and I admire immensely,' he says, 'but I'm not a Ry Cooder. I'm not exploring the exotic side of tango, and I don't play on the record, I only sing on one song because I was asked to do so. I love what was done in Buena Vista, but the aesthetics and recording aspects of the two projects are very different.'

The Barbican concert will feature some of the greatest names in tango. Keeping the beat going are Osvaldo Requena (piano), Horacio Cabarcos (double bass) and Anibal Arias (guitar), while tango's plangent, melancholy strings are in the virtuos hands of Sebastien Couranjou and Fernando Suárez Paz – best known as lead violinist in

Piazzolla's last great quintet during the 1980s. Performing on the bandoneón – the button accordion that is the quintessential tango instrument – are Miguel Angel Varvello, Luis Antonio Stazo (of Sexteto Mayor fame), Hector Silva, Juan José Mosalini and Osvaldo Montes. Two singers confirmed when this programme went to press were Juan Carlos Godoy and Nina Miranda. Dancers Alejandra Gutty and Claudio Hoffman will ensure that the tangos, whether classic golden age numbers or new-guard style, keep one foot firmly in the ballroom.

Gotan Project's Eduardo Makaroff has called tango 'the first world music – after all, it went round the world at the very beginning of the 20th century'. But Café de los Maestros – nostalgic, romantic and full of eccentric, virtuosi stars – reminds us that the spirit of tango is also rooted firmly in Argentina and, arguably, in another era. Ultimately this show is a tribute to and a celebration of a unique group of singers and musicians, the likes of which the world is unlikely to see again – and it will serve as an inspiration to tangueros present and future.

'I had a lot of incredible moments making Café de los Maestros,' says Santaolalla. 'You learn a lot from these guys because they are really very colourful and they have very well-lived lives.'

Programme note © Chris Moss

Some of the material has been adapted from an interview in this month's issue of Songlines magazine; Chris Moss writes regularly on tango for the publication and is also travel editor at Time Out magazine.

Presented in association with Como No!

There will be one interval in tonight's concert. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the Barbican premises. No cameras, tape recorders or any other recording equipment may be taken into the hall.

TANGO WORKSHOP

Fri 26 Jun 6pm – 7pm
Introduction to Tango (age 16+) @
Conference Rooms.

7pm FreeStage Tanguarda

This quartet is a new arrival to the European tango scene and having already played extensively throughout the Netherlands, they are quickly gaining an impressive reputation as a sought after group.

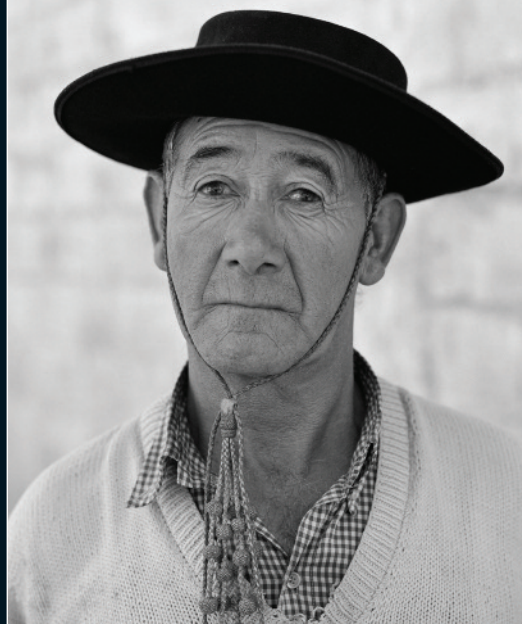


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Sat 27 Jun 12pm Gillett Square, Dalston

Yoruba Andabo
+ Changui de Guantanamo
+ Son del Tropic



Sat 27 Jun 7.30pm

Pablo Milanes
+ Harold Lopez Nussa
+ Son del Tropic



Sun 28 Jun 7.30pm

Los Van Van + Yoruba Andabo
A steaming night of Cuban dance music.



Thu 2 Jul 7.30pm

David Sanborn + special guest Sam Moore
+ Yolanda Brown



Fri 3 Jul 8pm

Ute Lemper: Angels Over Berlin



Sat 4 Jul 8pm

Carmen Linares
+ Andres Pena and Pilar Ogalla



Fri 10 Jul 7.30pm

Hiromi / Tineke Postma Quartet / Yaron Herman
Featuring Geri Allen & Teri Lyne Carrington



Sat 11 Jul 7.30pm

Boban Markovic Orkestar
Toni Kitanowski & Cherkezi Orchestra



Thu 16 Jul 7.30pm

Sing The Truth: Nina Simone Remembered
Featuring Dianne Reeves, Lizz Wright, Angelique Kidjo & Simone



Fri 17 Jul 7.30pm

Orchestra di Piazza Vittorio



Sun 19 Jul 3pm (Cargo)

Beyond The Ballroom: A Celebration of UK Jazz Dance
Gilles Peterson & Snowboy, The Mighty Jeddo, Dilanga



Sun 19 Jul 7.30pm

Very Cellular Songs: The Music of The Incredible String Band

Featuring Mike Heron and Clive Palmer, Richard Thompson, Danny Thompson, Alasdair Roberts, Trembling Bells, Dr Strangely Strange & Robyn Hitchcock



Fri 24 Jul 7.30pm

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis



Sat 25 Jul 7.30pm

Antibalas
+ Gangbe Brass Band



Sun 26 Jul from 5pm

Spok Frevo (5pm) / Kasai Allstars (8.30pm)



Tue 28 Jul 7.30pm

The Flatlanders
+ Rodney Crowell