

# PROGRAM NOTES



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## **Tango Ballet** (1956)

**Astor Piazzolla** (1921-1992)

Version for String Quartet

I. Titulos - II. La calle - III. Encuentro - Olvido -  
IV. Cabaret - V. Soledad - VI. La calle

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**Astor Piazzolla** might be likened to George Gershwin, a figure who similarly straddled high and low art traditions with marked success. Born in Argentina to Italian immigrants, Piazzolla spent much of his youth and indeed much of his adult life shuffling back and forth between Buenos Aires

and New York. In his early years, he worked as bandoneonist in tango orchestras. A member of the accordion family, the bandoneon was brought to Argentina by German and Italian Immigrants, and it provided the signature sound for that internationally beloved Argentinian dance and music genre, the tango - much as the sound of the Cajun accordion marks Louisianian zydeco.



*Astor Piazzolla with Nadia Boulanger, circa 1955*

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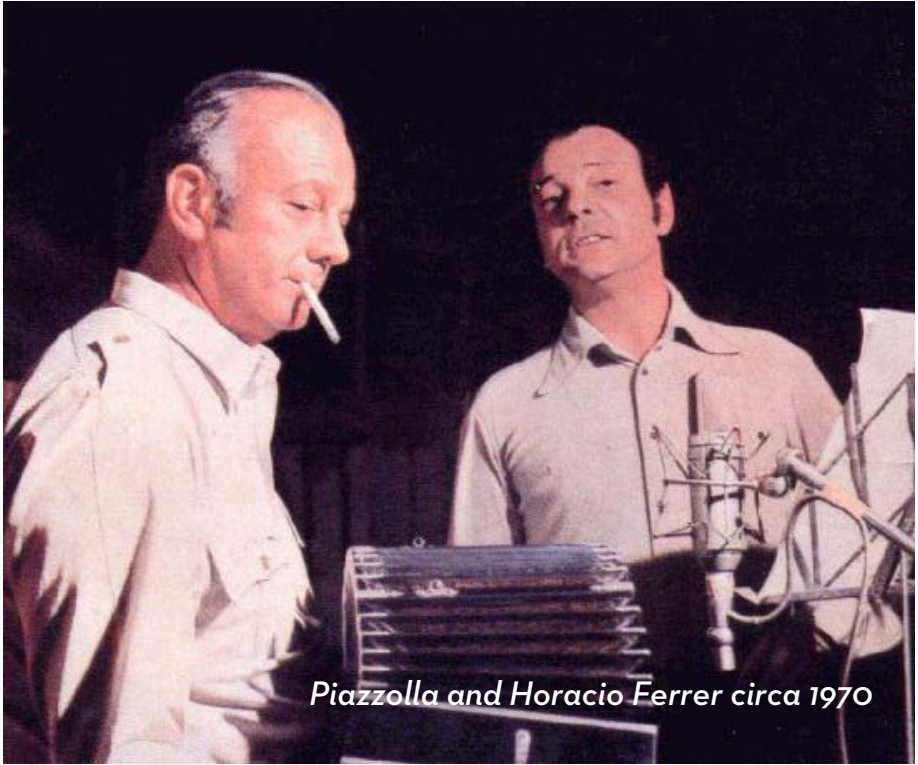
Aspiring to more serious musical achievements, Piazzolla studied music for five years in the early 1940s with Alberto Ginastera, and then for one year in the mid-1950s with the outstanding French musician-pedagogue, Nadia Boulanger, the teacher of Copland and many other illustrious American

composers. Encouraged by Boulanger, his favorite teacher, to continue to work with the tango genre, Piazzolla developed something alternately called “nuevo tango” (“new tango”) and “avant-garde tango,” a genre incorporating tango and jazz along with modern high art techniques and forms, and one that eschewed improvisation in favor of composition. This was tango, explained Piazzolla, that was intended to be listened to rather than danced to.

Piazzolla wrote the **Tango Ballet**, an example of the *nuevo tango*, as a film score (for a dance film since lost) in 1956. The work was originally scored for an eight-person ensemble he just recently had organized consisting of two violins, cellist, bass, two bandoneons, piano, and electric guitar. Recorded in 1964 and 1989, the work caught on especially as arranged alternately for string quartet and string orchestra, although it has been arranged for solo piano and other instrumental ensembles as well. The work is in six continuous movements: “Titulos” (“Titles”), “La calle” (“The street”), “Encuentro-Olvido” (“Meeting—Oblivion”), “Cabaret,” “Soldead” (“Loneliness”), and “La calle.” The work, whose form and program vaguely resembles Gershwin’s *An American in Paris* for orchestra, unfolds a fast-slow-fast- slow-fast design, with “Encuentro” and “Soldead” constituting the slow sections.

-- Note by **Dr. Howard Pollack, University of Houston**--





*Piazzolla and Horacio Ferrer circa 1970*

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## **Oblivion**

**Astor Piazzolla** / Arr. Jisoo Ok

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*Oblivion* became one of the most (if not the most) famous compositions by Astor Piazzolla, which he composed in 1982 for Mario Bellochio's film *Enrico IV*. *Oblivion* greatly demonstrates Astor Piazzolla's melodic power. The haunting succession of notes leaves plenty of room to the interpreter for his own expressiveness, while in the background, the rhythm based on the original slow milonga from the countryside of Argentina, gives a smooth but harmonically colorful framing.

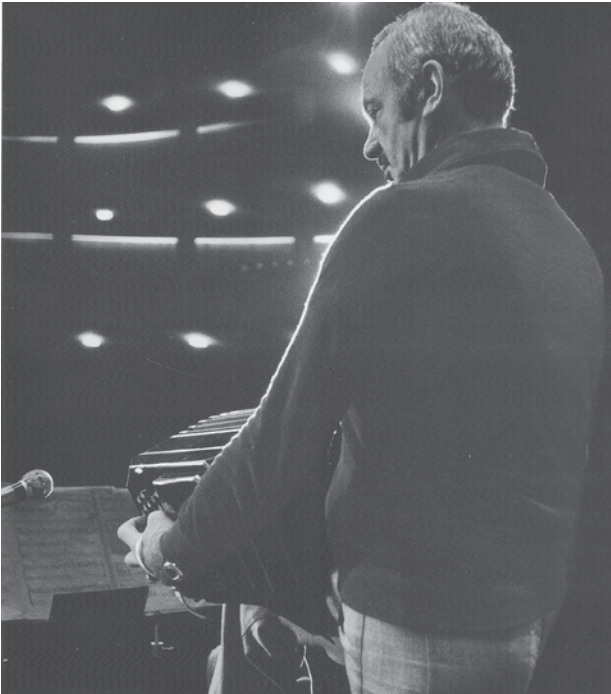
# **Gallo Ciego**

**Agustin Bardi** / Arr. Victor Lavallen & Jisoo Ok

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Composed in 1927 by Agustin Bardi, one of the greatest composers in the history of Tango, *Gallo Ciego* became one of the iconic pieces in the repertoire of the Osvaldo Pugliese's Orchestra (of which Héctor Del Curto was a member from 1988-1993) when it was recorded in 1959 and arranged by Victor Lavallén. This special adaptation for string quartet and bandoneon is based on that arrangement, re-orchestrated by Jisoo OK.

-- Note by **Héctor Del Curto** --



*Astor Piazzolla, 1975*

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# ***Deep River: Rhapsody for String Quartet*** (2021)

**Adolphus Hailstork** (b. 1941)

WORLD PREMIERE

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*Deep River: Rhapsody for String Quartet* was commissioned by Apollo Chamber Players in 2021. They requested that I base my composition on material representing my heritage in some way. I chose (as I usually do in my string pieces) to quote a favorite spiritual, this one being *Deep River*. This piece represents a slave's visions of escape, over the river (usually the Ohio). This idea carries with it a sense of energy, of freedom, even joy and the humor they imagine upon deliverance. A sudden interruption by the whip brings them back down to the cruelty and sadness of the situation. Eventually, sadly, they recover, and, quietly embrace again the distant vision they hope to realize someday.

-- Note by **Adolphus Hailstork** --



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***Trace of Time*** (2021)

**Héctor Del Curto** (b. 1971)

WORLD PREMIERE

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*Trace of Time* is a single movement piece which cycles through some of the most culturally relevant rhythms from the Rio de La Plata: the tango, the milonga and the waltz. It also follows traces left by the composers and musicians I greatly admire, such as Osvaldo Pugliese, Astor Piazzolla, and the former pianist of the latter, Pablo Ziegler with whom I have been sharing the road of music for the past 30 years.

*Trace of Time* was commissioned by Apollo Chamber Players in 2021 during the pandemic which for many people including myself, seemed to have stopped time on March

12, 2020. This piece perhaps will serve me as a trace to find myself in the future when recollecting this challenging time for human history.

-- Note by **Héctor Del Curto** --



*Héctor Del Curto RadioTango ensemble.*







## ADOLPHUS HAILSTORK

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**Adolphus Hailstork** received his doctorate in composition from Michigan State University, where he was a student of H. Owen Reed. He had previously studied at the Manhattan School of Music, under Vittorio Giannini and David Diamond, at the American Institute at Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger, and at Howard University with Mark Fax.

Dr. Hailstork has written numerous works for chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band, orchestra, and opera. Among his early compositions are: CELEBRATION, recorded by the Detroit Symphony in 1976; OUT OF THE DEPTHS (1977), and AMERICAN GUERNICA (1983), are two band works which won national competitions. CONSORT PIECE (1995) commissioned by the Norfolk (Va.) Chamber Ensemble, was awarded first prize by the University of Delaware Festival of Contemporary Music.



Significant performances by major orchestras (Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York) have been led by leading conductors such as James de Priest, Paul Freeman, Daniel Barenboim, Kurt Masur, Lorin Maazel, Jo Ann Falletta and David Lockington. In March 2019 , Thomas Wilkins conducted Hailstork's AN AMERICAN PORT OF CALL with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The composer's second symphony (commissioned by the Detroit Symphony, and second opera, JOSHUA'S BOOTS (commissioned by the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Kansas City Lyric Opera) were both premiered in 1999. Hailstork's second and third symphonies were recorded by the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra (David Lockington) and were released by Naxos. Another Naxos recording, AN AMERICAN PORT OF CALL (Virginia Symphony Orchestra) was released in spring 2012.

Recent commissions include RISE FOR FREEDOM, an opera about the Underground Railroad, premiered in the fall of 2007 by the Cincinnati Opera Company, SET ME ON A ROCK (re: Hurricane Katrina), for chorus and orchestra, commissioned by the Houston Choral Society (2008), and the choral ballet, THE GIFT OF THE MAGI, for treble chorus and orchestra, (2009). In the fall of 2011, ZORA, WE'RE CALLING YOU, a work for speaker and orchestra was premiered by the Orlando Symphony. I SPEAK OF PEACE commissioned by the Bismarck Symphony (Beverly Everett, conductor) in honor of (and featuring the words of) President John F. Kennedy was premiered in November of 2013.



Hailstork's newest works include THE WORLD CALLED (based on Rita Dove's poem TESTIMONIAL), a work for soprano, chorus and orchestra commissioned by the Oratorio Society of Virginia (premiered in May 2018) and STILL HOLDING ON (February 2019) an orchestra work commissioned and premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Awaiting premieres are TULSA:1921 for mezzo, strings, percussion and harp, and Symphony no. 4, A KNEE ON THE NECK for 3 soloists, choir, and orchestra.

Dr. Hailstork is retired from college teaching, and currently works as a composer in Virginia Beach (VA).



## HÉCTOR DEL CURTO

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Praised by the New York Times as a “splendid player,” Grammy-winning musician, composer, recording artist and educator **Héctor Del Curto** is one of the world’s most sought-after bandoneonists. He has performed with many renowned artists across musical genres, and appeared with the world’s leading orchestras, including the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Saint Louis Symphony, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.

Mr. Del Curto’s recent engagements include a recorded performance of Piazzolla’s bandoneon concerto Aconcagua with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Thomas Wilkins, a performance of Piazzolla’s Four Seasons of

Buenos Aires with the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and a performance with the Portland Symphony Orchestra, which included Del Curto's composition, Paris to Cannes. His 2021-2022 season highlights include performances with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra and a world premiere performance of his newly commissioned work for Apollo Chamber Players.

Buenos Aires-born Del Curto is a fourth-generation bandoneonist who won the title "Best Bandoneon Player Under 25" in Argentina at age 17, and was subsequently invited to join the orchestra of the legendary Osvaldo Pugliese, the "Last Giant of Tango". In 1998, Mr. Del Curto became music director of Forever Tango, a Broadway hit that continues to tour the world. Soon after, he founded the Eternal Tango Orchestra, a ten-piece ensemble that debuted at New York's Lincoln Center, as well as the Hector Del Curto Tango Quintet. Both are featured on his self-produced albums, Eternal Piazzolla and Eternal Tango, which were profiled by BBC News and Public Radio International.

Mr. Del Curto has appeared on recordings with such artists as Osvaldo Pugliese, Astor Piazzolla, Paquito D'Rivera, Tito Puente, and Plácido Domingo. As part of the Pablo Ziegler Trio, he received a 2018 Grammy award for Jazz Tango.

Dedicated to the education, outreach, and the preservation of tango, Mr. Del Curto co-founded the Stowe Tango Music

Festival in 2014, and continues to serve as its artistic director. The premier tango music festival in the United States, it draws the most talented tango musicians and dancers, as well as fans, from all over the globe. He also produced the festival's awarding-winning album: Live at the 2016 Stowe Tango Music Festival.





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A passionate advocate of contemporary music, Apollo launched a bold project in 2014 to commission 20 new multicultural works by the end of the decade. 20x2020 saw its triumphant conclusion in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic with digital world premieres and

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